

EPIGRAPHS, SCRIPTURE, AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE EARLY DELHI SULTANATE

The Dome of the Rock (691) in Jerusalem was the first expensive, aesthetically oriented religious structure in Islamic history. It was also the first to use architectural inscriptions as part of its overall theme and decoration. Though these inscriptions were small and difficult to see in the dimly lit interior, they offered several themes that had direct bearing on the social and religious functions of this shrine in a city with a Christian population that was both large and powerful and took notable pride in its many splendid monuments. The Arab traveler al-Muqaddasi noted in 985 that it was vital for Islam in its first century to construct magnificent structures that would match and transform the inherited architectural environment. Thus the epigraphic program of the Dome of the Rock makes explicit references to Islam's unyielding monotheism, to its rejection of Christ's divinity but its acceptance of Christ's role as a prophet, and its belief in Muhammad's unique role as Allah's Messenger bearing the final revelation. It has been convincingly argued that there was nothing haphazard about the selection of the Qur'anic verses that make up the larger part of these epigraphs and that it was the written word that was considered the suitable vehicle for these central beliefs.¹ The Dome of the Rock is not alone in having a specific and very carefully chosen epigraphic program.

In significant ways Islam's subsequent experience in late-twelfth and early-thirteenth-century India paralleled seventh-century Syria and Palestine. The vast majority of the population of the Delhi Sultanate in its first 128 years of existence under the Mu'izzi and Khalji sultans from 1192 to 1320 consisted of non-Muslims who adhered to faiths possessing rich figural traditions in the arts and architecture, and the visual landscape abounded in monuments erected to display the tenets of these other faiths. But there were also important differences: Islam came to India under Ghurid leadership, not as a recently revealed faith, but rather as a long-established religion that had a five-

hundred-year-old culture with complex theologies and a vital architectural heritage of its own. Islam brought not only the distinctive, identifying traditions of architecture necessary to create structures symbolizing an enduring state, but also its own, virtually unique means of demonstrating central religious convictions through the use of monumental epigraphy. It is this particular facet of architectural history that will be explored here, not in terms of stylistic development, but instead as a means of investigating and elucidating the political, social, and religious history of medieval Sultanate India through its visual culture.²

The central monument for the early history of Islam in northern India is the early jami' masjid of Delhi, begun in the late twelfth century during the reign of Sultan Mu'izz al-Din and continued by his Mu'izzi and Khalji successors.³ Both in its architectural style and in its extensive epigraphs it owes much to Ghaznavid and Ghurid precedents. This essay will examine all of the extant inscriptions in or near this complex and in the jami' masjid of Ajmer. Given the diversity of religious currents in Central Asia and northern India, then, this study can only be regarded as an initial foray into unraveling theological and social complexities and pointing to possible future research directions. Its underlying premise is that inscriptions were carefully selected to set out key doctrinal points and to support, emphasize, and elucidate recent history and contemporary events.

STATE, FAITH, AND ARCHITECTURAL EPIGRAPHS UNDER THE GHAZNAVIDS AND GHURIDS OF AFGHANISTAN

The spheres of Ghaznavid and Ghurid authority in the eleventh and twelfth centuries included the regions of Ghur, Ghazna, Sind, and Punjab. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 998–1030) conducted more than twenty raids into northern India between 1001 and 1027. The Ghurids continued this strategy in the last quarter of

the eleventh century and often met defeat until their victory at the second battle of Tarain in 1192.

As elsewhere in Islam, disputation loomed large in intellectual and social life under the Ghaznavids and Ghurids, and the religious environment was complex. The Hanafi *madhhab* (school) probably had the greatest influence under both dynasties. The Shi'a, including an Isma'ili community, in Ghazna and Firuzkuh had their own intellectual and theological traditions. The Shafi'i scholar and philosopher Fakhr al-Din Razi, who had influence at the Ghurid court in Firuzkuh, was intimately familiar with Greek philosophy and with Ibn Sina's thought, and he struggled against Karamiyya theologians.⁴ Shafi'i scholars with their rigorous testing of prophetic tradition rejected many purported hadith that the Hanafis relied upon and therefore challenged their authority. Sufis seem to have had substantial followings in Khurasan, and if al-Hujwiri's writings are any indication, Ghazna was a center of sufi activity. Some rejected the prescriptive approaches of the *madhhab*, while others rigorously advocated them. Relatively unorganized, the sufis were early on also vulnerable to penetration by Ghaznavid spies who were suspicious of their activities.⁵ The Ghurids inherited these tensions. Accordingly, the mainly Hanafi religious officials of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid state had to defend their views on four fronts. First, they had to respond to Shafi'i criticism that the Hanafi school was too lax in its identification of valid hadith. Second, their methods of reasoning had to appear rigorous enough to compete with the philosophers in the Greek tradition. Third, they had to accommodate many of the established Shi'a, while responding harshly to Isma'ilis and some sufis who were thought to have strayed too far from orthodox faith and practice. And fourth, they had to deal with Karamiyya criticism of traditional Sunni and Shi'a doctrines.

The Ghaznavids were active architectural patrons. Literary sources offer a number of references to their buildings. With the plunder from his northern Indian campaigns, Sultan Mahmud commissioned in Ghazna a new mosque, the Arus al-Falak, and a madrasa; a palace, the Gawshak-i Kuhan-i Mahmudi; and a garden, the Bagh-i Mahmudi. He is also credited with building a number of other gardens and palaces: the Bagh-i Sad Hazara, the Bagh-i Firuzi, the Gawshak-i Dawlat and the Gawshak-i Sapid, as well as elephant stables, irrigation canals, and dams. Outside Ghazna, Mahmud built a palace in Balkh, while his brother Yusuf commissioned the al-Sa'idi madrasa in Nishapur in 999–

1000.⁶ Mahmud's son, Mas'ud, took an active interest in the design of buildings and commissioned his own palace, the Gawshak-i Mas'udi, which he had decorated with spoils from Indian campaigns.⁷

Surviving Ghaznavid architectural remains can be found in Ghazna, Bust, and Sangbast. In Ghazna there are the minars of Mas'ud III and Bahram Shah, the palace of Mas'ud III, remains of the houses of prominent men, as well as fragments and funerary structures.⁸ Mahmud's waterworks project, the Band-i Sultan, has survived north of Ghazna.⁹ In the suburbs of Bust, three Ghaznavid palaces in ruins at Lashkar-i Bazar have been surveyed.¹⁰ Finally, in Sangbast, the domed square "mausoleum" of Mahmud's governor Arslan Jadhib has been documented.¹¹

The two most celebrated figures of the Ghurid empire are the brothers Shams al-Din Muhammad (later Ghiyath al-Din) b. Sam, who ruled from the Ghurid heartland of Firuzkuh between 1163 and 1203, and Shihab al-Din Muhammad (later Mu'izz al-Din) b. Sam, who ruled from Ghazna between 1173 and 1206. Both initially adhered to the Karamiyya doctrines widespread in Ghur, but as they extended their power, they were increasingly inclined towards the Shafi'i and Hanafi *madhhabs*.¹² Ghiyath al-Din was also partial to the Shafi'i *faqih* and philosopher Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, who angered the Karamiyya ulema dominant in Ghiyath al-Din's court at Firuzkuh. Another clue to Mu'izz al-Din and his court's religious outlook on Islam is his attempt to eliminate the Qarmatians (Isma'ilis) in Multan in 1175.¹³

The architecture of Ghur, for which there is relatively little textual and archaeological evidence, has only been briefly summarized thus far by K. A. Nizami and warrants further elaboration.¹⁴ We are somewhat more fortunate when it comes to knowing the architectural efforts that took place during the reigns of Ghiyath al-Din and Mu'izz al-Din. Ghiyath al-Din ordered the construction of a madrasa for Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in Herat and contributed to the Friday mosque.¹⁵ In Chisht, he appears to have supported the development of a mosque and madrasa. In Khurasan, he commissioned mosques, madrasas, and caravanse-rais.¹⁶ At his capital Firuzkuh, he commissioned the minar of Jam.¹⁷ It is also said that he funded several Shafi'i colleges throughout his territories.¹⁸ Only the fragments at Chisht and the minar of Firuzkuh have been identified and studied.¹⁹ An immense madrasa attributed to a female patron was also completed in 1175–76 during Ghiyath al-Din's reign in Gargistan

(northwestern Afghanistan) of which fragments have survived.²⁰ Mu'izz al-Din commissioned a fortress at Sialkot near Lahore,²¹ as well as mosques and madrasas at Ajmer. He is also associated by name with the minar and the first stage of the jami' masjid in Delhi.²²

In what is believed to be the Ghurid capital city of Firuzkuh between Chisht and Ahangaran stands the great minar erected during the reign of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad and inscribed with the entire chapter Maryam (Qur'an 19: 1–98) in the intertwining vertical bands of the minar's lower half.²³ The chapter refers to the revelations sent by God to his messengers John, Jesus, Abraham, Moses, Ishmael, Idris, and Noah. The message eventually went unheeded, and humanity is chastised for its waywardness and ignorance of God. Mary's immaculate conception is affirmed, but the notion that God would have a son is seen as an affront that will be addressed on the Day of Resurrection.

Four Kufic inscriptions in bands are located on the upper half of the minar.²⁴ The first is the profession of faith (*shahāda*): "I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God." The second inscription is Qur'an 61: 13–14: "Help from Allah and present victory. Give good tidings (O Muhammad) to believers! O ye who believe." The third inscription gives the ruler's name, "The magnificent Sultan Ghiyath al-Dunya wa'l-Din Abu'l-Fath Muhammad b. Sam." The fourth inscription provides his honorifics: "the magnificent Sultan, the august king of kings, Ghiyath al-Dunya wa'l-Din, who exalts Islam and Muslims, Abu'l-Fath Muhammad b. Sam, the agent of the Commander of the Faithful, may God preserve his rule!" Other fragments on the minar mention the work of 'Ali and Abu'l-Fath.

The body of extant Ghaznavid and Ghurid epigraphs is limited, and it is difficult to draw from it any substantive conclusions about epigraphy. Many of the inscriptions are funerary and predictably speak to the universal experience of death. It is really only the inscriptions on Ghiyath al-Din's minar at Firuzkuh that invite broader inquiry, and there the range of possibilities is intriguing. Do the selections demonstrate the tensions within and between Hanafi, Shafi'i, and Karamiyya thought? With their references to biblical history do they reflect the influential Jewish presence in Ghur?²⁵ More importantly, is it appropriate to see the minar, not as the end of an architectural and epigraphic Ghaznavid–Ghurid tradition in Afghanistan, but rather as the first monument of a new Ghurid

tradition that will subsequently flourish under the dynasty and its descendants in northern India?

If one considers these inscriptions along with the elaborate inscriptions at the early jami' masjid complex of Delhi, then there is an impressive body of evidence suggesting that architectural epigraphy had signal importance for the Ghurids. Complex inscriptions could only have been made by individuals who were profoundly learned, alert to current affairs, and functioning at high official levels. With their knowledge of the Qur'an, hadith (Sayings of the Messenger Muhammad), *tafsir* (exegesis), shari'a (religious law), and contemporary social, political, and religious issues, senior qadis (canon lawyers and judges) would have been the logical choice to consult about appropriate epigraphic selections for new buildings. More significantly, qadis had real authority to resolve issues not only of the faith but also of *awqāf* (charitable endowments), water distribution, and property ownership and development. Along with their legal and spiritual duties, they were key regulators of the built environment.

Scholars and Texts. The following observations are an initial attempt to make more tangible the interplay of texts and personalities that enlivened the complex intellectual environments at the Ghurid courts in Ghazna, Firuzkuh, and Delhi. Much research still needs to be done. At this point it is only possible to touch on a few of the works that charged Hanafi–Traditionist and Maturidi perspectives on the meanings of the Qur'an and influenced the qadis in the employ of Mu'izz al-Din and Qutb al-Din Aybak. Through them we can gain some idea of the complexities behind the selection of Qur'anic inscriptions.²⁶

One of the earliest and most comprehensive collections of hadith, the *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Collection of Sound Tradition) of al-Bukhari, has a chapter devoted to instances where the Prophet explained the significance of certain passages from the Qur'an. Along with the collection of Muslim, it was available to Mawlana Razi al-Din al-Hasan al-Saghani (d. 1252) of Badaon who settled in Iltutmish's court at Delhi in 1220 and popularized both compilations of hadith in his *Mashāriq al-anwār* (Sunrise of Lights), a rearrangement and editing of Bukhari and Muslim that became the standard work in Indian madrasas. The eighth-century *al-Fiqh al-Akbar I* (Greater Jurisprudence) was widely known, and it established general Hanafi principles of belief. It appears in Rukn al-Din al-Kashani's bibliography.²⁷

It is possible that the Qur'an commentary of al-

Tabari was known to the Delhi ulema since it was translated into Persian for the Samanid ruler Abu Salih Mansur b. Nuh, who ruled over Transoxania and Khurasan from 961 to 976, but no mention of it is found in the later historical literature. The scholar/mystic al-Hujwiri (d. 465–69), who was forced to move from Ghazna to Lahore, speaks of the popular but incomplete *tafsir* by the Hanafi legal scholar Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Tirmidhi and says that it was widely circulated among theologians. Al-Maturidi himself wrote a commentary entitled *The Book of Commentary on the Qur'an*.²⁸ Though there is no clear evidence that it was read, Rukn al-Din al-Kashani's bibliography demonstrates that the works of Maturidi's students were known in the Delhi Sultanate.

The *Testament* (*Wasīya*) of Abu Hanifa was seen as part of standard, traditionist Hanafi doctrine in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the early tenth century A.D., the *Fiqh Akbar II*, probably written by al-Ash'ari (d. 935), provided a model for the writings of later Maturidi scholars.²⁹ The writings of al-Ghazali were well known in the Delhi Sultanate as well. One of the most significant texts on the Hanafi–Maturidi position is the creed (*'aqida*) of Najm al-Din al-Nasafi (d. 1142), though only *al-Manzūma al-Nasafīyya fī al-khilāfatiyya* ("Nasafi's Didactic Poem on the Caliphate") by the same author is mentioned by Rukn al-Din al-Kashani.

The *tafsir* that was probably the most widely read by the ulema when the early jami' masjid of Delhi was constructed was the recently completed work by the Mu'tazili al-Zamakhshari (1070–1144), who was from Khiva.³⁰ Despite the anti-Mu'tazili sentiment of Maturidi and Ash'ari scholars, al-Zamakhshari's *tafsir* was sufficiently learned and subtle to be considered as a valuable resource to the ulema, who were well versed in their opponents' points of views. Al-Juzjani makes no mention of al-Zamakhshari, but the date of his work and its known popularity in the later Delhi Sultanate strongly suggest that it was read. The Chishti shaykh Hamid al-Din Nagawri (d. 1276), a contemporary of Sultan Iltutmish, is recorded as having said, "Whatever is given in other works is from this book; whatever the people have liked, they have copied from it and have compiled a separate work in their own name."³¹ One of the most celebrated of all Chishti shaykhs, Nizam al-Din Awliya' (d. 1325), studied *fiqh* and *hadith* in Badaon and Delhi between roughly 1240 and 1250 A.D. He was also familiar with al-Zamakhshari's *tafsir* but, because of the anti-Mu'tazili sentiment of the ulema and sufis of the period, felt that

its author was to be consigned to hell. Al-Juzjani mentions the celebrated Fakhr al-Din Muhammad al-Razi (d. 1209), who was patronized by Sultan Ghiyath al-Din and his nephew Baha' al-Din in Ghazna and Herat. Al-Razi is thought to have died before completing his *tafsir*, so it would not have been in circulation when the epigraphs of Mu'izz al-Din's and Aybak's portions of the jami' masjid and minar were being selected, but it may have been available when Iltutmish made his additions later.

The Hanafi legal texts of the period that may have been widely read are the works of Abu'l-Hasan Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Quduri (972–1037) and the *Hidāya* of Mawlana Burhan al-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Marghinani (1135–97). Both are mentioned as being part of Nizam al-Din Awliya's education in Badaon and Delhi.³² In fact, the *Hidāya* is generally considered to be the principal text in the application of Islamic law in India to the present day.

THE GHURIDS IN INDIA AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE DELHI SULTANATE

Defeated by the Rajput confederacy under Rai Pithora in 1191 in the first battle of Tarain, the Ghurid sultan Mu'izz al-Din b. Sam returned in the following year and emerged victorious from the second battle of Tarain. In the words of the most important contemporary chronicler, "Almighty God gave the victory to Islam, and the infidel host was overthrown."³³ The sultan returned to Ghazna and appointed his general Qutb al-Din Aybak to rule as his deputy. Qutb al-Din rapidly took Mirath, Delhi, Gwalior, and Badaun so that by 1195 a great part of northern India was under Ghurid control. The city of Delhi was established as the administrative center of the new Indian domain, and at first its population consisted largely of soldiers. Muslim merchants, ulema, qadis, scribes, and officials began to migrate to Delhi, drawn by opportunities offered by members of the new ruling class like Malik Baha' al-Din Tughril. Appointed administrator of the territory of Thankar eighty kilometers southwest of Agra, Malik Baha' al-Din actively encouraged the settlement of merchants and men of credit from Khurasan and Hindustan by giving them land and houses.³⁴

Even after the establishment of a sultanate in Delhi in 1206, the sectarian debates that flourished in the Ghurid homelands informed the thinking of Muslim officials. Religious currents there seem to have been strongly influenced by Hanafi scholars subscribing to

Maturidi doctrine. Competing with Mu'tazili, Karamiyya, Traditionist, and Shi'i ideas, this *kalām* had developed in Samarqand and spread westward with the Seljuq Turks. A key feature of Maturidi thought was the definition of faith as dependent primarily upon inner assent, but it also emphasized the doctrine of the qualities of God, the existence of God's throne, and the actuality of Muhammad's ascension (*mi'rāj*) and vision of God. Hanafi-Maturidi religious intellectuals were numerous and powerful in Ghazna, first under Ghaznavid rule and then under the Ghurids. Since Ghazna was Mu'izz al-Din's seat of power, it is reasonable to assume that he endorsed the views of Hanafi-Maturidi officials.³⁵

In 1206 Mu'izz al-Din died, and Qutb al-Din was declared the ruler of an independent Delhi Sultanate. When he in turn died in 1210, the leadership of the Sultanate appointed another former mercenary slave, Iltutmish (r. 1211–36), as his successor after a brief interregnum, and it was during his long reign that Delhi became the center of Islamic political, religious, and cultural life in India. With some lapses it retained that position of primacy until the middle of the sixteenth century. In its first two centuries the Sultanate vigorously and steadily expanded to the east, south, and west, coming into constant conflict with Hindu principalities. In part, the Sultanate defined itself by its aggressive confrontations in the Abode of War (*dār al-harb*) in the Indian subcontinent, and so sought regular recognition from Baghdad and, later, Cairo through formal submission to the Abbasid caliph. Though Muslim immigrants came from the west and northwest and spoke Persian, Arabic, or Turkish, it was Persian that was the language of court and record-keeping. Persian administrative structures set the patterns of governance, at least at the high court level. After the onset of the Mongol invasions into Central Asia and Iran, many more immigrants came to India, where life was more secure and economic opportunities were greater, so that by the end of the thirteenth century the Sultanate had a diverse and numerous Muslim population. Delhi with its population of Muslims, Hindus, Jains, and Parsis became the most heterogeneous major city anywhere under Islamic rule.

Qutb al-Din Aybak was inclined toward Hanafi scholars. Coming as a youth from the slave markets of Turkestan, he served the chief qadi and governor of Nishapur under Seljuq rule, Fakhr al-Din 'Abd al-'Aziz, who claimed descent from Abu Hanifa. Al-Juzjani reports that Aybak studied the Qur'an with the qadi's

sons: "in attendance on, and along with his sons, he read the Word of God, and acquired instruction in horsemanship, and shooting with the bow and arrow, so that, in a short time, he became commended and favorably spoken of for his manly bearing."³⁶

His successor, Iltutmish, had grown up in the family of the chief qadi of Bukhara, lived some years of his early life in Ghazna and Baghdad, and was later purchased in Delhi by Qutb al-Din Aybak. After his ascent to the throne, he devoted several years to subduing rivals, and in 1229 welcomed an emissary, bearing robes of honor and formal recognition from the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. In 1234 he defeated the Hindu rulers of Malwa and demolished the sacred temple of Mahakali, one of the great religious centers of northern India. In the same year members of the Isma'ili population in Delhi made an attempt on his life during Friday prayer; in retaliation, Iltutmish not only drove them out of Delhi but also marched on Multan, where they had settled after being expelled from Ghazna by Sultan Muhammad Ghuri. The sultan died in 1236.

The deteriorating political situation in Khurasan and Transoxania resulting from the disintegration of the Ghurid empire, Genghis Khan's Mongol invasions of the region in 1220, and the retreat of the Khwarazmian army to Lahore accelerated the migration of the ulema, sufis, and notables from these afflicted regions to Delhi. Al-Juzjani writes that Delhi became a place of retreat for the learned and virtuous fleeing the advancing Mongol conquests of the provinces and cities of the west.³⁷ Immigration must have also been stimulated by Iltutmish's patronage of religious scholars and mystics. A qadi himself, al-Juzjani appreciated Iltutmish's generous support:

From the very outset of his reign, and the dawn of the morning of his sovereignty, in the congregating of eminent doctors of religion and law, venerable Sayyids, Maliks, Amirs, Sadrs, and [other] great men, the Sultan used, yearly, to expend about ten millions; and people from various parts of the world he gathered together at the capital city of Dihli, which is the seat of government of Hindustan, and the centre of the circle of Islam, the sanctuary of the mandates and inhibitions of the law, the kernel of the Muhammadi religion, the marrow of Ahmadi belief, and the tabernacle of the eastern parts of the universe—Guard it, O God, from calamities and molestations.³⁸

Distinguished members of the ulema were attracted to Delhi. For example, al-Saghani, a famous scholar

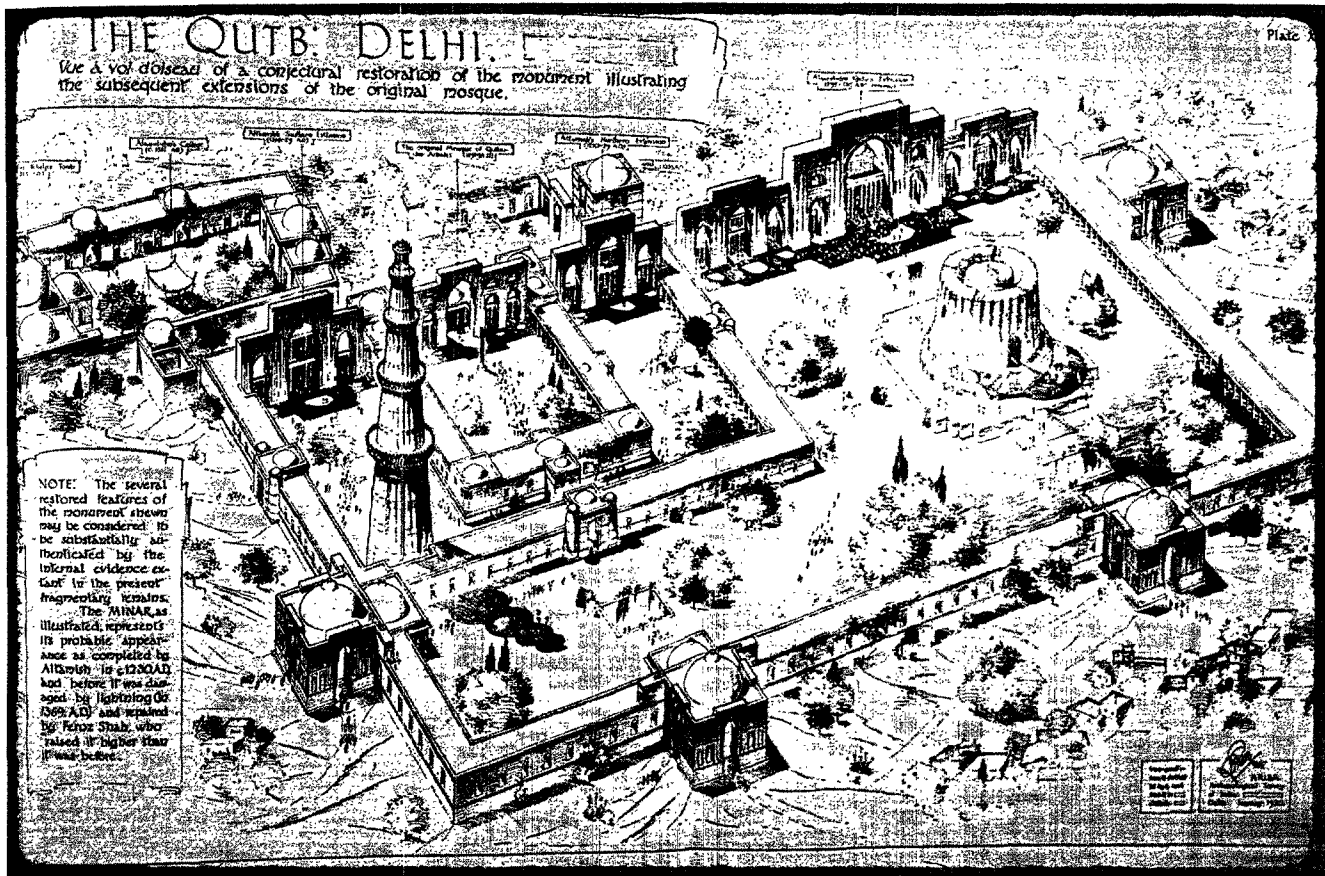


Fig. 1. General elevation of the early Delhi jami' masjid complex, 1192–1311, Delhi. (From J. A. Page, *An Historical Memoir on the Qutb: Delhi*, pl. III)

of hadith, originally hailed from Badaun, went to Baghdad, and then moved to Delhi. His text became standard in the curriculum of religious scholars. Awfi, the author of the history *Jāmi' al-hikāyāt*, which is dedicated to Iltutmish's minister Nizam al-Mulk Muhammad b. Abi Sa'id Junaydi, studied at a madrasa in Bukhara before settling in Delhi. Al-Juzjani came from Khurasan to Delhi via Ghazna, Mitha and Uch during Iltutmish's reign.

The immigration of sufis was also important. The Chishti mystic Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki traveled from Farghana to Baghdad, and from there to Multan and Delhi. In keeping with Chishti abhorrence of state sponsorship, he is portrayed in later hagiographical accounts as nobly resisting Sultan Iltutmish's offers of employment. There were, of course, disagreements between the Sunni ulema and the mystics as al-Hujwiri's writings and the controversy over the legitimacy of singing of mystical poetry (*samā'*) in the Delhi

Sultanate period shows. Given the influx of refugees from Khurasan and beyond, most of the doctrinal disputes and conflicts of Khurasan, Ghazna, and Sind under the Ghaznavids and Ghurids were probably continued in Delhi.

MONUMENTS AND INSCRIPTIONS

THE EARLY JAMI' MASJID OF DELHI

Central to this inquiry into early Sultanate epigraphy is the architectural complex of the early jami' masjid of Delhi: its great masjid, minar, madrasa, and two early tombs were the visible center of Islamic power in India from 1192 until the rise of the Tughluq dynasty in 1320 (fig. 1). Before the advent of the Ghurids, the whole site had been dominated by the Hindu Rajput citadel of Lal Kot, and the immediate area of the mosque had been occupied by the citadel's Vaishna-

vite temple. Thus the founding of a mosque in this spot by Sultan Mu'izz al-Din and his general Qutb al-Din Aybak meant not only the destruction of the existing temple, it also signified the symbolic appropriation of the land itself. Like the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, this location already had the aura of holiness, and now, re-used for an architectural statement of the new order of politics, government, and religion, it became a sign of the conquest.³⁹

Qutb al-Din Aybak was the true force behind the jami' masjid complex. Writing during the reign of Iltutmish, Hasan Nizami records that Mu'izz al-Din commanded the demolition of temples in Ajmer and then ordered the construction of mosques and madrasas from their ruins.⁴⁰ However, Hasan Nizami clearly credits Qutb al-Din with the construction of the Delhi jami' and its epigraphs: "Qutb al-Din built the Jami' Masjid at Delhi and adorned it with stones and gold obtained from the temples which had been demolished by elephants, and covered it with inscriptions in *tughra*, containing the divine commands."⁴¹ The historical inscriptions in the mosque give credit to both Aybak as its builder in 1192 and Mu'izz al-Din as its patron in 1197, but Qutb al-Din was appropriately recognizing his suzerain.

This architectural complex used a form, the hypostyle mosque, classic in Islam to the west but new to Delhi and its environs. Constructed for the most part out of red sandstone with some decorative marble facing, it also made use of pillars and other materials taken from twenty-seven destroyed Hindu and Jain temples in the vicinity. But these structural elements supported a great number of figural sculptures and were not immediately appropriate for a Muslim place of worship: therefore most of the images were chiseled off, and the rest were concealed under layers of plaster. Through this pragmatic recycling of temple architecture the imprint of the old faith was diminished, a first step in transforming this part of the *dār al-ḥarb* into the *dār al-Islām*. Specific parts of the demolished temples were, however, preserved—most notably the Iron Pillar directly in front of the central arch of the qibla (fig. 2). Stone blocks with figural sculptures were also imbedded in walls and were even used as steps in the mosque's entrances so that the images of the past would be trod underfoot by Muslims coming to pray, a clear sign of the triumph of the new faith and the establishment of a new ruling class, a major theme in the epigraphic program of the

jami' masjid complex over the 128 years of development examined here.

The principal entrances into Qutb al-Din's original mosque are on the east and north sides, and each bears an important Qur'anic inscription in *naskhī* script. At the eastern entrance are two verses from the Qur'an (3: 91–92) that refer to the non-Muslims on the outside and then address the Muslims who enter the mosque:

Lo! those who disbelieve, and die in disbelief, the (whole) earth full of gold would not be accepted from such a one if it were offered as a ransom (for his soul). Theirs will be a painful doom, and they will have no helpers.

Ye will not attain unto piety until ye spend of that which ye love. And whatsoever ye spend, Allah is aware thereof.⁴²

On the inner lintel is a historical inscription in Persian:

This fort was conquered and this jami' masjid was built (in the months of) the year 587 (1191–92) by the amir, the great and glorious commander of the army, Qutb al-Dawlat wa al-Din Aybak Sultani, may God strengthen his helpers. The materials of twenty-seven temples on each of which 2,000,000 deliwals had been spent, were used in this mosque. May God the great and glorious have mercy upon him who should pray for the faith of the good builder.⁴³

An additional Persian inscription repeats this information on the arch of the east gate: "This mosque was built by Qutb al-Din Aybak. May God have mercy on him who should pray for the faith of this good builder." Historical and Qur'anic epigraphs should be understood as a unity of mutually supporting parts: both verse 91 and the historical information about the source of building materials refer to the conquered Hindu and Jain population and implicitly condemn them for their disbelief. Encouraging spending on pious works, verse 92 reinforces the two historical inscriptions that identify the pious benefactor, Qutb al-Din Aybak.

Qur'an 10: 26 is inscribed over the north entrance and is a promise of salvation and paradise for those who do good. As at the east gate, there is an additional historical inscription in Arabic. It and the Qur'anic citation once again present the Ghurid ruler as someone who is doing good and will inherit paradise: "In the year [5]92 (1197) this building was erected by the

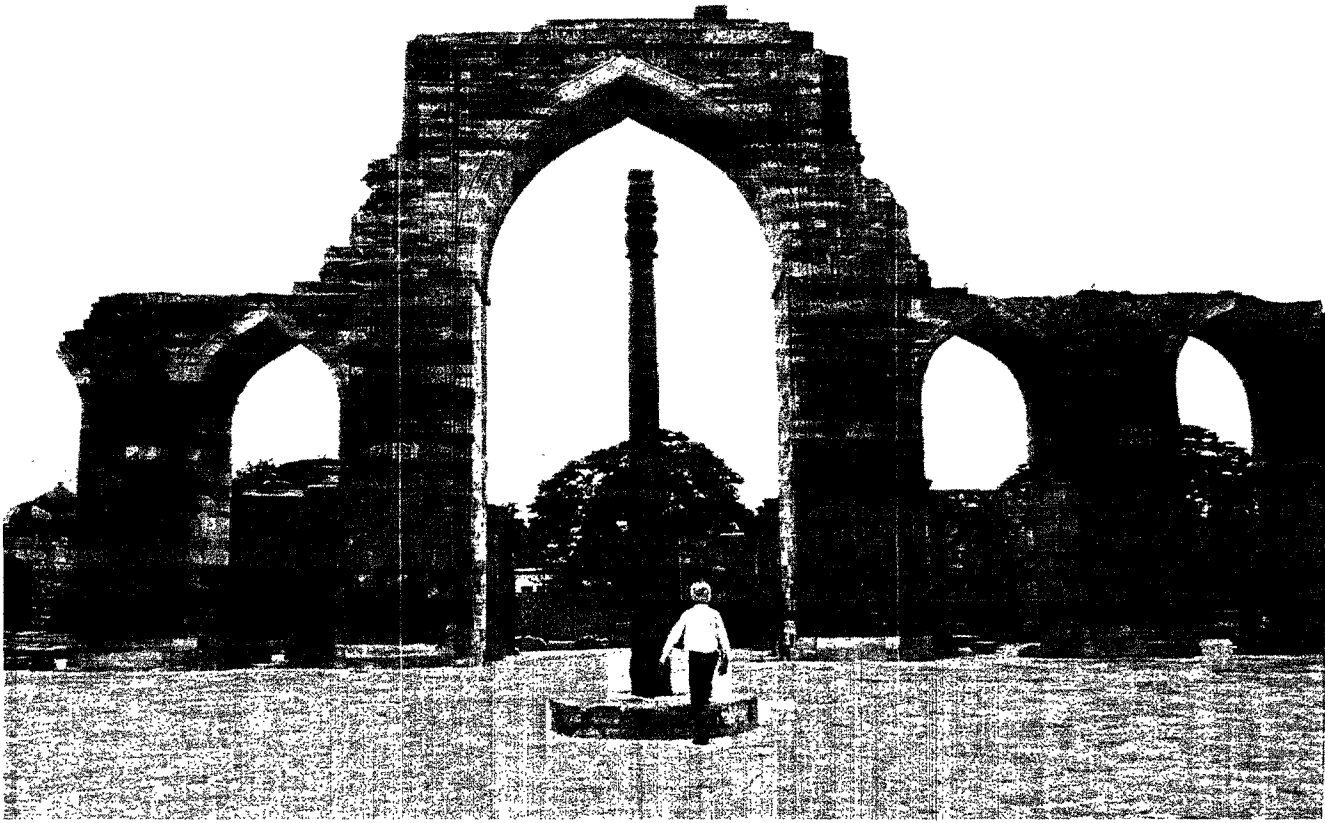


Fig. 2. Iron pillar and Qutb al-Din's qibla screen, jami' masjid of Delhi, late 12th to early 13th century. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

high order of the exalted Sultan Mu'izz al-Dunya wa'l-Din Muhammad b. Sam, the helper of the prince of the faithful."

These inscriptions are only a small part of the extensive epigraphic program in virtually every part of the mosque complex. The selection of Qur'anic verses is extremely diverse and complex, the work of religious officials in the army and government of sultans Qutb al-Din and Iltutmish. A notable example of such an important dignitary was al-Juzjani's own father, Mawlana Saraj al-Din Minhaj, who in 1186, five years before the first Ghurid invasion of northern India, "became the qadi of the forces of Hindustan, and, dressed in an honorary robe, conferred upon him by Sultan Mu'izz al-Din, in the audience hall [or tent] of the camp he established his Court of Judicature."⁴⁴ Although Mawlana Saraj al-Din may not have been still serving as army qadi during the occupation of Delhi, whoever occupied the office would have been the most

senior religious official present in the city and the most likely candidate for selection as qadi of Delhi. The development of an epigraphic program for the new capital's jami' masjid would have come under such an official's authority.

THE MINAR

Located 10.2 meters from the qibla wall and immediately in front of its central and largest arch is the famous Iron Pillar (fig. 2), cast in the fourth century: it was probably set in place here in front of the site's original Vaishnavite shrine in the middle of the eleventh century and was topped with an image of Garuda, the Hindu god of victory. With the sculpture of the deity removed by Qutb al-Din's builders (presumably the victorious Muslim commander was aware of the irony), the pillar became a suitable, though highly unusual embellishment for the mosque around it and

served as another symbolic expression of the displacement of Jain and Hindu faiths by Islam.⁴⁵

This symbol of the conquest was amplified in a more traditional way by the construction of the great minar against the mosque's southern wall, for the minar as a Muslim form functions not only as a *ma'dhana* from which the faithful may be called to prayer, but also as a visible commemoration of victory and as a means of marking a landscape as part of the *dār al-Islām* (fig. 3). The immediate precursor in the Ghurid lands to the north was the great minar of Jam, slightly shorter and uniformly cylindrical, without the fluting and wedge-shaped articulation of its counterpart in Delhi. Apart from its historical inscription ascribing its construction to Qutb al-Din's overlord, Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad b. Sam, its epigraphic content, as we have noted, consists largely of Qur'an 19 (Maryam).

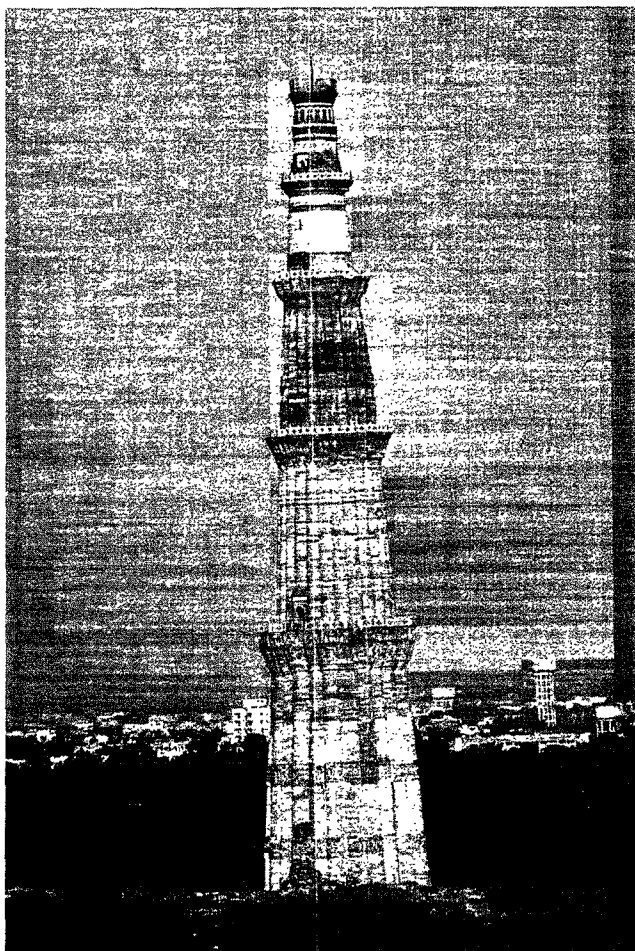


Fig. 3. Minar of jami' masjid, 1192–1236, Delhi. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

These preceding, largely non-epigraphic observations are central to an understanding of the inscriptions on the Delhi minar and jami' masjid, for Qutb al-Din and Iltutmish's construction is a remarkably unified creation. But it is important to remember the construction chronology. The first story was completed under the authority of Mu'izz al-Din b. Sam and Qutb al-Din Aybak. The second, third, and fourth stories were, according to their historical inscriptions, constructed under the patronage of Sultan Iltutmish as a sign of his devotion to a noted holy man in Delhi, Khwaja Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. The present fifth and final story resulted from extensive repairs to the original fourth story, damaged by lightning during the reign of Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351–88).

The minar's essential religious epigraphs appear on the first story in six bands. The styles and disposition of script recall epigraphic achievements in twelfth-century Khurasan and suggest that the designers of these inscriptions were Khurasani or Khurasani-trained calligraphers, who also designed the inscriptions elsewhere in the jami' complex and in the contemporary jami' masjid of Ajmer. The first band has been badly disturbed by later restorations. A fragment of a Persian historical inscription refers to "the amir, the commander of the army, the glorious, the great." In addition, parts of two chapters from the Qur'an (6: 11 and 13: 1) can be identified. Both passages refer to disbelievers who do not accept the revelation of Islam, a theme that will recur on the minar and other structures in the complex. In addition, with its distinct reference to the Qur'an itself, 13: 1 points to the actual presence of scripture on the minar itself:

Alif. Lām. Mim. Rā. These are verses of the Scripture.
That which is revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the Truth, but most of mankind believe not.

The second band on the minar's first story offers two inscriptions. The first (59: 21–22) is a basic statement of God's uniqueness and omniscience. It is combined with an Arabic historical inscription referring to the victorious Ghurid ruler:

. . . necks of the people, master of the kings of Arabia and Persia, the most just of the sultans of the world, Mu'izz al-Dunya wa'l-Din . . . the kings and sultan, the propagator of justice and kindness . . . the shadow of God in east and west, the shepherd of the servants of God, the defender of the countries of God . . . the firm . . . sky, victorious against the enemies . . . the glory of the magnificent nation, the sky of merits . . . the sul-

tan of land and sea, the guard of the kingdoms of the world, the proclaimer of the word of God, which is the highest, and the second Alexander (named) Abu'l-Muzaffar Muhammad b. Sam, may God perpetuate his kingdom and rule, and Allah is high, beside Whom there is no God, Who knows what is hidden and what is revealed. He is compassionate and merciful...

The third band is from Qur'an 48: 1–6 (al-Fath) and begins with a statement relevant both to Islam's recent conquest and to the architectural function of the minar:

Lo! We have given thee a signal victory,

That Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come, and may perfect His favour unto thee, and may guide thee on a right path,

And that Allah may help thee with strong help—

He it is Who sent down peace of reassurance into the hearts of the believers that they might add faith unto their faith. Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is ever Knower, Wise—

That He may bring the believing men and the believing women into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide, and may remit from them their evil deeds—That, in the sight of Allah, is the supreme triumph—

And may punish the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women, and the idolatrous men and the idolatrous women, who think an evil thought concerning Allah. For them is the evil turn of fortune, and Allah is wroth against them and hath cursed them, and hath made ready for them hell, a hapless journey's end.

These six verses promise Allah's guidance, reassurance, and assistance to believers, and offer a very tangible vision of the paradise awaiting the faithful. With their reference to the "heavens and the earth," they also describe the minar itself, resting on the earth but stretching into the heavens. They end, however, by warning of the fate awaiting not simply disbelievers, but, more specifically, idolators: Hindus and Jains were not among the "people of the book" belonging to the monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Thus this third band of epigraphy on the great minar focuses on three main points: God has given Muslims a great victory; God will stand by and support the faithful; God will punish the hypocrites and the idolators.

These verses appear to have been selected with care in order to offer the most direct scriptural reference

to the particular situation in which Qutb al-Din Aybak and his followers found themselves. In 629 Muhammad and his followers had been refused permission to enter Mecca. After the Treaty of al-Hudaybiya in the following year the Muslims were allowed into Mecca, and the Prophet ordered the destruction of the idols in the Ka'ba. The "signal victory" is a reference to these events.⁴⁶ The person responsible for selecting these verses for the Delhi minar was therefore drawing an exact parallel between the Prophet's actions in Mecca and the situation in contemporary northern India. In 1191 Sultan Mu'izz al-Din and his general Qutb al-Din Aybak had been defeated at the first battle of Tarain and had been forced to retreat to the Ghurid homeland. On their return in 1192 they were triumphant, and they also destroyed the "idols," namely, the Hindu and Jain temples of Delhi from whose materials the jami' masjid was built. The parallel with the Meccan experience 562 years earlier was evidence of the unfolding of a divine plan. References to defeat followed by victory will occur again and again in the inscriptions in the complex.

On the fourth band is an Arabic historical epigraph praising Sultan Ghiyath al-Din b. Sam Ghuri, Mu'izz al-Din's older brother and the distant ruler of these new domains, and briefly referring to the loyal younger brother:⁴⁷

The greatest sultan, the most exalted emperor, the lord of the necks of the people, the master of the kings of Arabia and Persia, the sultan of the sultans of the world, Ghiyath al-Dunya wa al-Din, who rendered Islam and the Muslims powerful, the reviver of justice in the worlds, the grandeur of the victorious government . . . of the magnificent, the bright blaze of the Caliphate, the propagator of kindness and mercy amongst created beings, the shadow of God in east and west, the defender of the countries of God, the shepherd of the servants of God, the guard of the kingdoms of the world, and the proclaimer of the word of God, which is the highest, Abu . . . b. Sam, an ally of the prince of the faithful, may God illumine his proofs.

The fifth band presents chapter 59: 22–23:

He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Knower of the Invisible and the Visible. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.

He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him).

These verses are followed by all the *asmā' al-husnā*, God's ninety-nine most beautiful names. Their use appears to assert the validity of the doctrine of attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God as an extension of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), an important topic in Maturidi thought. The citation of 59: 22–23 and the names of God can be seen as offering Qur'anic support for the compatibility of the doctrines of *tawḥīd* and the attributes of God since the verses assert the oneness of God and then begin the listing of His names. The importance of this doctrine is reinforced by its placement high on the first story.

Occupying the sixth band is a long inscription from Qur'an 2: 255–60 (al-Baqara):

Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.

There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm hand hold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower.

Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

Bethink thee of him who had an argument with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom; how, when Abraham said: My Lord is He Who giveth life and causeth death, he answered: I give life and cause death. Abraham said: Lo! Allah causeth the sun to rise in the East, so do thou cause it to come up from the West. Thus was the disbeliever abashed. And Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.

Or (bethink thee of) the like of him who, passing by a township which had fallen into utter ruin, exclaimed: How shall Allah give this township life after its death? And Allah made him die a hundred years, then brought him back to life. He said: How long hast thou tarried? (The man) said: I have tarried a day or part of a day. (He) said: Nay, but thou hast tarried for a hundred years.

Just look at thy food and drink which have rotted! Look at thine ass! And, that We may make thee a token unto mankind, look at the bones, how We adjust them and then cover them with flesh! And when (the matter) became clear unto him, he said: I know now that Allah is Able to do all things.

And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: Yea, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease. (His Lord) said: Take four of the birds and cause them to incline unto thee, then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.

Particularly verse 255 (the Throne Verse, which appears with great frequency on buildings and objects throughout the Islamic world) stresses Allah's omnipotence. As in the use of the chapter al-Fath in the third band, the mention of the heavens and the earth once again refers to the minar that linked them. The later verses return to the theme of disbelievers. Verse 256 refers to false deities; verse 257 threatens the disbelievers; verses 258–60 record Abraham's conversation with an unbeliever and describe the divine power to create and maintain life.

Here are compelling allusions to the contemporary social, political, and religious situation. The citation on the sixth band (2: 256: "There is no compulsion in religion") can be interpreted as a reference to the religious policy that the Muslims saw themselves adopting toward the Hindu/Jain populace. The following verse encourages them to reject polytheism, making faith a matter of free choice but underscoring the punishment awaiting idol-worshippers who disparage Allah. The final three verses turn to Abraham whose devotion to monotheism and whose destruction of idols must have seemed an appropriate object lesson for the polytheists in northern India. These references to the resurrection of life and townships were also evocative allusions to the re-use of sites and materials to build the *jami'* masjid and minar.

The historical references and naming of patrons constitute a clear hierarchy of authority at the time of the building's construction. On the first band is the phrase, "The amir, the commander of the army, the glorious, the great," a reference to Qutb al-Din Aybak. On the second band are Mu'izz al-Din's name and honorifics, and there is a clear allusion to his military successes, notably the victory at Tarain. He is described

as "victorious against the enemies . . . the sultan of land and sea . . . and the second Alexander." The third band divides the two brothers' names with a citation from the Qur'an, and Ghiyath al-Din's name appears on the fourth band. Whereas Mu'izz al-Din is "the most just of the sultans of the world," Ghiyath al-Din is described as "the sultan of the sultans of the world" and as "an ally of the commander of the faithful," clear reflections of his superior authority, reinforced by the higher placement of his name on the minar. The fifth band includes the names of God and is subordinate to the sixth and highest band that bears the Throne Verse and proclaims that God is the supreme authority.

The lower band on the second story is an Arabic historical inscription and recounts the names, titles, and requisite praises of Iltutmish, the patron responsible for stories two, three, and four:

The most exalted sultan, the great emperor, the lord of the necks of the people, the pride of the kings of Arabia and Persia, the shadow of God in the world, Shams al-Dunya wa'l-Din, the help of Islam and the Muslims, the crown of kings and sultans, ... in the worlds, the grandeur of the victorious government, the majesty of the shining religion, helped from the heavens, victorious over his enemies, the bright meteor of the sky of the caliphate, the propagator of justice and kindness, the guard of the kingdoms of the world and the proclaimer of the word of the High God, Abu'l-Muzaffar Iltutmish al-Sultani, the helper of the prince of the faithful, may God perpetuate his kingdom and rule and increase his power and rank.

Over the doorway is a shorter but similar Arabic inscription:

The completion of this building was commanded by the king, who is helped from the heavens, Shams al-Haqq wa'l-Din Iltutmish-i Qutbi, the helper of the prince of the faithful.

Above these historical inscriptions on the second story is a band presenting the final two Qur'anic citations on the minar. The first comes back to a central theme by presenting verses 29–30 of chapter 14:

[verse 28: Hast thou not seen those who gave the grace of Allah in exchange for thanklessness and led their people astray to the Abode of Loss],

(Even to) hell? They are exposed thereto. A hapless end!

And they set up rivals to Allah that they may mislead

(men) from His way. Say: Enjoy life (while ye may), for lo! your journey's end will be the Fire.

With its emphasis on the story of Abraham and its several rejections of idolatry, this chapter must have had particular resonance for the Muslim leadership in Delhi. The second Qur'anic selection consists of two verses (62: 9–10) that affirm directly the importance of congregational prayer and the call to prayer from the minar.

The epigraphs on the first two stories of the great minar present several themes, underlining Allah's omnipotence, the importance of prayer and faithful adherence to Islam, and the pain and anguish awaiting disbelievers and idolators. It is this latter theme which is the constantly recurring message. The selected verses had precise bearing on the new Muslim state in northern India. These significant verses are all confined to the lower stories, where literate and sharp-eyed persons, familiar with the Kufic and *naskh* scripts, could have read them. The remaining Arabic inscriptions on the upper three stories are solely historical epigraphs, referring to rulers and their works.⁴⁸

QUTB AL-DIN'S QIBLA SCREEN

Under the patronage of Qutb al-Din and Iltutmish a great stone screen was erected on the west side of the mosque's courtyard in order to provide a suitably imposing façade for the mosque's qibla. Designed to resemble qiblas from mosques to the west, it effectively concealed the pillars taken from Hindu and Jain temples and provided a surface for one of the most extensive epigraphic programs in Islamic history. Immediately to the west of the famous Iron Pillar stands the screen's high central arch flanked on each side by two lower arches (fig. 2). This area, then, forms the core of the earliest part of the mosque. On the south side of the central arch is the date 594(1198–99). Late in his reign Iltutmish expanded the jami' masjid and provided a substantial extension of the original screen with three additional arches on each of its sides. On the south of the southernmost of these later arches is the date 627(1229–30).

It is immediately apparent that the inscriptions, which form a major part of the decorative surface on Qutb al-Din's screen, differ in important ways from the inscriptions on the minar: architectural position therefore seems to have been an important factor in the selection of epigraphs. Briefly, the hadith and

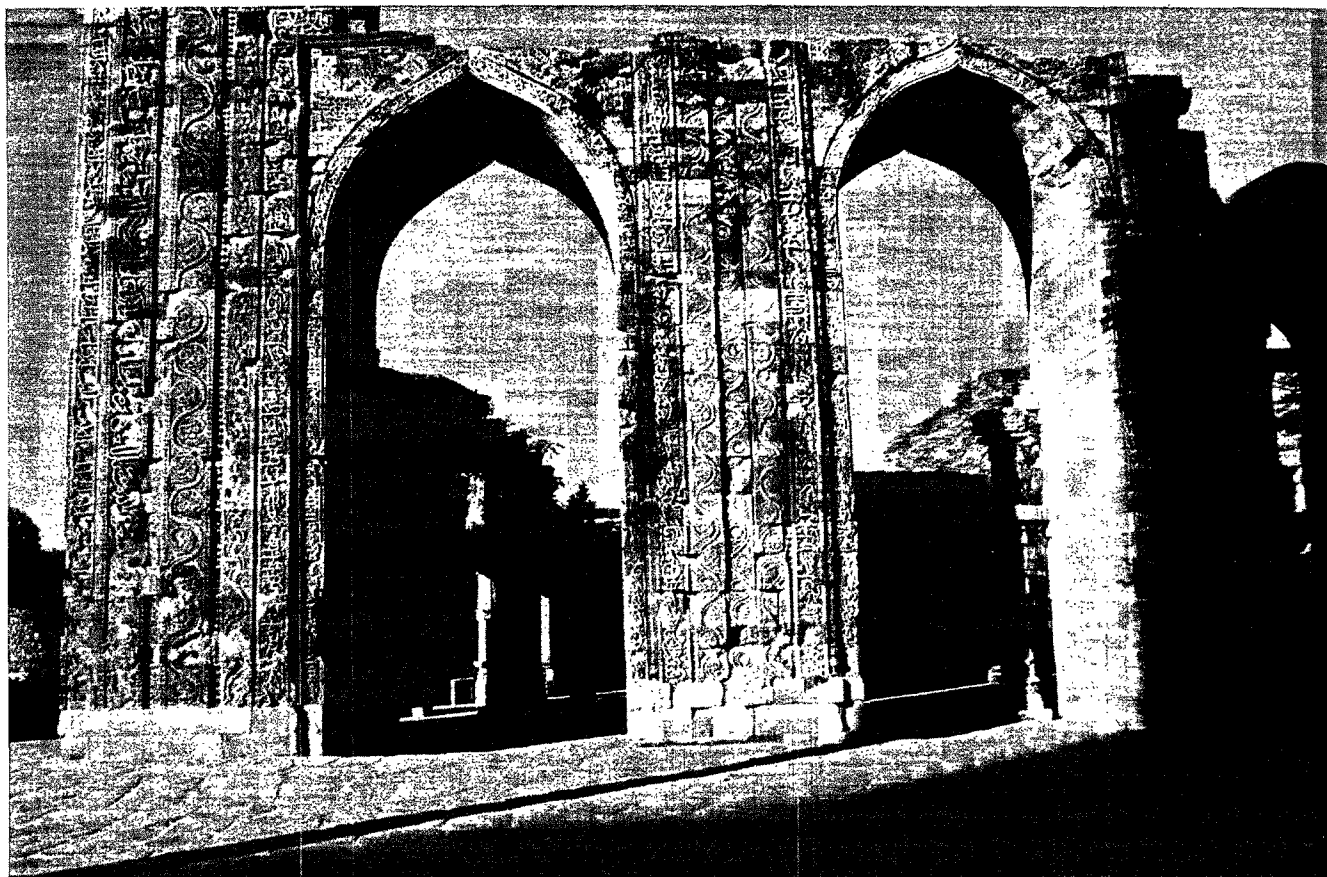


Fig 4. Northern arches of Qutb al-Din's qibla screen, jami' masjid of Delhi, late 12th to early 13th century. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

Qur'anic verses that are used on the qibla screen put much less emphasis on the punishment awaiting disbelievers and stress instead the importance of worship, the obligations incumbent upon believers, and the power of God.

The screen is like an open book, held vertically in front of its readers (the faithful gathered in worship) to present carefully selected passages from the Qur'an and hadith. Visual support for the imam-khatib leading the community in prayer and delivering a sermon, it is scripture in stone and should be "read" from right to left in keeping with the movement of the Arabic script. Therefore, anyone facing the screen should begin with the northernmost arch of Qutb al-Din's original mosque (fig. 4). This arch's inscriptions combine three hadiths and a passage from the Qur'an. The first hadith can be found in the al-Bukhari and Muslim collections of hadith. The source of the other two is not known.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The Prophet, peace be on him, said: "Islam is founded on five basic principles: there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God; the offering of prayer; the giving away of the poor-rate; the keeping of fast during Ramadan; the pilgrimage to the House (of God at Mecca) enjoined on those who can afford it."

And the Prophet, peace be on him, said, "The mosques are built for God, the Most High."

And the Prophet, peace be on him, said, "Whoever visited ... a mosque visited (so to say) the Most High God (Himself), and it is incumbent on the one thus visited to bless the visitor. And all praise is due to God... ."

The principles of Islam are expounded in a clear form, and reference is made to the importance of the mosque as a building of special worth and importance. For the early rulers of Muslim India it was an unquestioned necessity to build mosques of imposing size in order

to counter the physical presence of Hindu and Jain temples and to transform the architectural content and outline of the landscape. These three hadiths then can be viewed as a theoretical justification for the building program undertaken by the Mu'izzi sultans.

The Qur'anic portion of this arch's inscriptions is from chapter 3: 189–93, and these particular verses emphasize God's omnipotence and the need to believe. 3: 189 begins with sovereignty: "Unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. Allah is able to do all things." Appropriately, it may have been the passage most visible to the worshipping ruler, since the maqsura was most often to the right of the main mihrab, here the central arch. If this hypothesis is correct, then social authority may have been one of the determinants of an epigraph's placement.

The second arch, immediately to the left, presents the theme of disbelief and destruction in the form of historical examples from chapter 25: 36–39:

Then We said: Go together unto the folk who have denied Our revelations. Then We destroyed them, a complete destruction.

And Noah's folk, when they denied the messengers, We drowned them and made of them a portent for mankind. We have prepared a painful doom for evil-doers.

And (the tribes of) 'Aād and Thamūd, and the dwellers in Ar-Rass, and many generations in between.

Each (of them) We warned by examples, and each (of them) We brought to utter ruin.

The allusion to the defeat of the non-Muslim peoples of India is obvious, and historical references to Noah's community and to 'Ad and Thamud make it clear that that will be the fate of all those who deny the Revelation. But the arch is thematically balanced by further verses from the same chapter (25: 61–67), which turn to the subject of belief and the blessedness enjoyed by believers. The destruction visited upon disbelievers and the blessedness awaiting believers are therefore thematic opposites on the arch. Faith and prayer were also the themes of the Qur'anic verses on the remaining portion of the southernmost arch of Qutb al-Din's original mosque.

The central, large arch (fig. 2), immediately to the west of the Iron Pillar, bears the date of the arch and portions of two chapters. The first six verses of chapter al-Isra' (17: 1–6) include the famous description of the *mi'rāj* of the Prophet and go on to deal with

the revelation to Moses and the punishment of the Children of Israel for their lapses from it. The fact that these verses ornament the high, central arch immediately in front of the mihrab indicates how very significant they were for the patrons (fig. 5):

Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night from the inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship, the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.

We gave unto Moses the Scripture, and We appointed it a guidance for the Children of Israel, saying: Choose no guardian beside Me.

(They were) the seed of those whom We carried (in the ship) along with Noah. Lo! he was a grateful slave.

And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture: Ye verily will work corruption in the earth twice, and ye will become great tyrants.

So when the time for the first of the two came, We roused against you slaves of Ours of great might who ravaged (your) country, and it was a threat performed.

Then We gave you once again your turn against them, and We aided you with wealth and children and made you more in soldiery.

To the Mu'izzi patrons verses 4–6 must have offered particularly prophetic references. Muslim Turkish armies, as slaves of God, had invaded India in 1191 under Mu'izz al-Din. Though they had emerged victorious then, the Hindu rulers had not accepted this divine warning. Accordingly, the second Muslim invasion in 1192 ended in Islam's victory, and northern India was ravaged and occupied. The defeated Hindu armies, enjoying such great numerical superiority, were overcome through the fact that they were ignorant of the Revelation and did not have divine support. To the Muslim army and its leadership they were idolators who did not possess a scripture and whose religious practices were the antithesis of their own. As we shall subsequently see, these key verses from chapter 17 preoccupy the three major patrons of the mosque and are central to understanding not only the role epigraphy plays in defining the function of this whole architectural complex, but also the political and religious attitudes of the early Delhi sultans toward their Hindu subjects.

The rest of the central arch supports chapter 23: 1–14, verses that define the obligations of believers

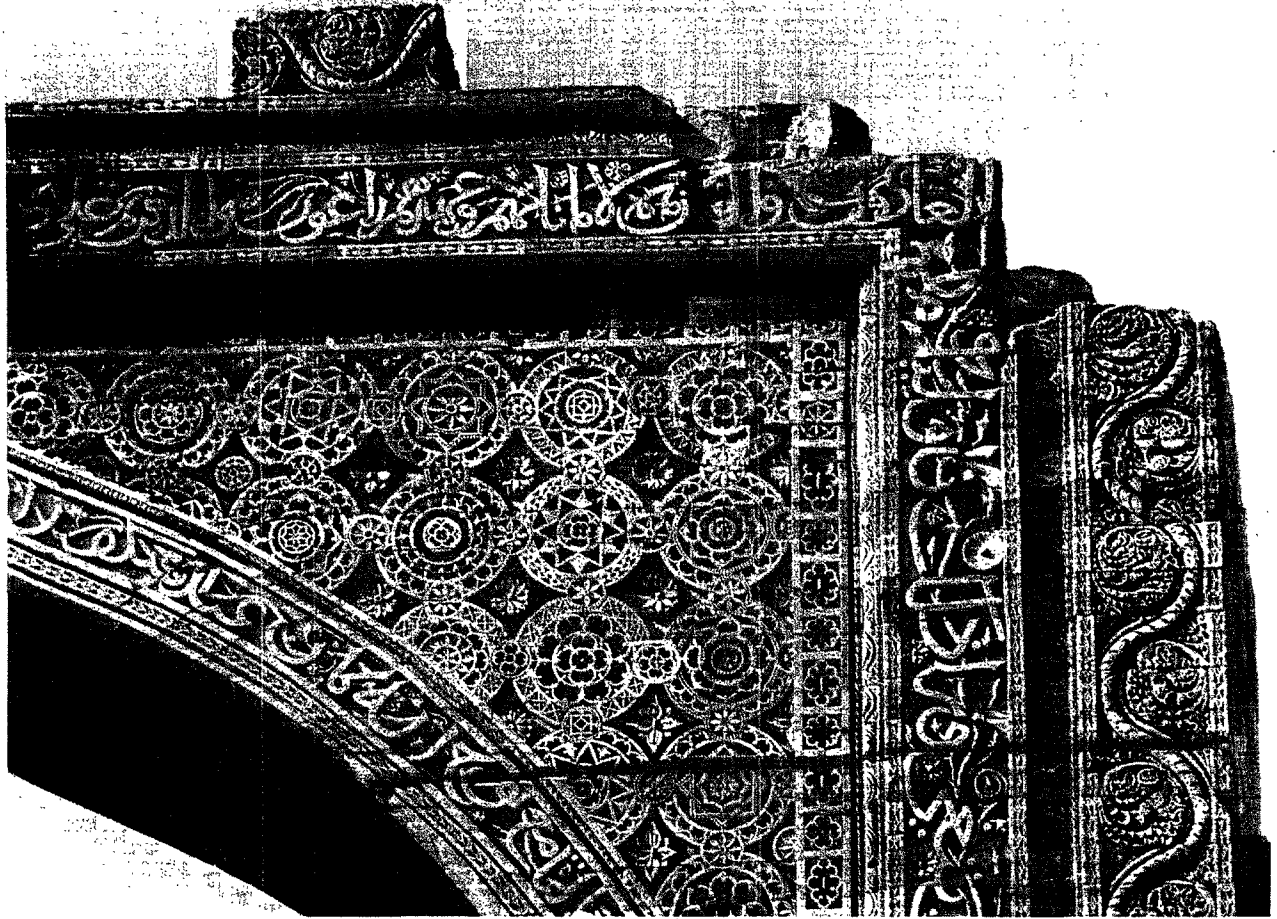


Fig. 5. Detail of central arch of qibla screen, jami' masjid of Delhi, late 12th century. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

and God's role as sole Creator. Together the two Qur'anic selections emphasize divine power, either as destroyer of those who neglect or reject the Revelation or as creator of life and protector of the faithful. Their specific reference to the revelation and to prayer suggests that the mosque's minbar was placed in the immediate vicinity of the central arch.⁴⁹

The adjoining arch to the left supports additional verses from chapter al-Isra' (17: 78–82). The first three verses again deal with the obligations and times of prayer; but verses 81 and 82 turn to a different theme:

And say: Truth hath come and falsehood hath vanished away. Lo! falsehood is ever bound to vanish.

And We reveal of the Qur'ān that which is a healing and a mercy for believers though it increase the evil-doers in naught save ruin.

It was verse 81 that was recited by the Prophet Muhammad as he watched the destruction of the idols around the Ka'ba after the Muslim conquest of Mecca in 630. In India, to the Muslims a country of idol worshipers, it was singularly appropriate. Having co-existed largely with People of the Book in the Muslim lands to the west, this new situation must have seemed similar to the transition from the Days of Ignorance before Islam (the *Jahiliyya*). Inviting comparison between the Prophet's actions and those of the Ghurids, this verse stated Muslim aspirations and pre-saged their intent. Verse 82 underscores this point by its reference to the Revelation of the Qur'an, a boon for the faithful in contrast to the destruction toward which the idolators were heading.

Also included on the same arch are the initial verses of the chapter al-Fath (48: 1–5). Verses 1–6 had also been inscribed on the third band of the first story of

the minar. Here, however, only verses 1–5 are used—referring to God’s victory, support for believers, and promise of paradise—but verse 6, which specifically cites and threatens the hypocrites and idolators, is omitted, so that the inscription focuses on the virtues of belief rather than the punishments awaiting disbelief. This makes good sense, for those to whom it would have been visible would have been the Muslim faithful in the mosque.

Only a portion of the badly damaged southernmost arch is still extant. On it is written one of the more frequently cited hadith: “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “The mosques are the Divine courtyards and structures. The Most High Allah orders their erection ... confers blessings on their inmates.” In addition, two verses from chapter 30: 17–18 are used that define the times of prayer. Through its epigraphs this arch therefore states the importance of mosques as structures and the need to build them; it then identifies when the faithful should pray. Like the first and northernmost arch of Qutb al-Din’s original screen, this arch combines hadith and Qur’an, a balanced placement that was the result of careful planning. Not only in their combination of hadith and Qur’an, but also in their reiteration of similar themes, the southernmost and northernmost arches form a pair, an integral unit framing and binding together the whole prayer wall screen.

ILTUTMISH’S EXTENSIONS TO THE QIBLA SCREEN

As with the minar, Qutb al-Din’s mosque was extended by the third Mu’izzi sultan, Iltutmish, in order to accommodate the growth of the Muslim population in Delhi and to commemorate his many military victories. These 1229–30 extensions are also densely inscribed, and the inscriptions continue the basic tenor of the earlier epigraphs on the original qibla screen. In 1229–30 under his patronage two sections of three arches each were joined to the north and the south of Qutb al-Din’s qibla screen (fig. 6), while the outer walls of the mosque on the north, east, and south were extended, more than tripling the area of the building to accommodate the rapid growth of Delhi’s population. His own tomb may have been begun at this time, for it is behind the northwest corner and is aligned with the expanded mosque’s north wall. As a result of this expansion, the great minar was now situated



Fig. 6. Southern arch of Iltutmish’s extension of qibla screen viewed from the west, jami’ masjid of Delhi, early 13th century. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

in the southeast corner within the walls of the enlarged mosque.

The northernmost arch, immediately in front of Iltutmish’s tomb (ca. 1235), is in ruinous condition, and only retains some portions of chapter 67: 10–15 explicitly concerned with obedience to Allah and salvation for the righteous. The second and middle arch of Iltutmish’s northern extension presents two Qur’anic inscriptions that may have special significance, though for different reasons. Two verses from chapter al-Fath (48: 15–16) that referred to half-hearted followers of the Prophet in the seventh century seem to have been directed here at recent converts to Islam, or to less than enthusiastic Muslims in Iltutmish’s own army, or possibly also to the Rajput forces (“a folk of mighty prowess”) opposing the Mu’izzis:

Those who were left behind will say, when ye set forth to capture booty: Let us go with you. They fain would change the verdict of Allah. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Ye shall not go with us. Thus hath Allah said beforehand. Then they will say: Ye are envious of us. Nay, but they understand not, save a little.

Say unto those of the wandering Arabs who were left behind: Ye will be called against a folk of mighty prowess, to fight them until they surrender; and if ye obey, Allah will give you a fair reward; but if ye turn away as ye did turn away before, He will punish you with a painful doom.

A second long inscription appears on the same arch. It is composed of ten verses from chapter Ya Sin (36: 1–10):

Ya Sin.

By the wise Qur'an.

Lo! thou art of those sent

On a straight path,

A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful,

That though mayst warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so that they are heedless.

Already hath the word proved true of most of them, for they believe not.

Lo! We have put on their necks carcans reaching into their chins, so that they are made stiff-necked.

And We have set a bar before them and a bar behind them, and (thus) have covered them so that they see not.

Whether thou warn them or thou warn them not, it is alike for them....

Its significance here may be quite personal, for these verses with their image of the bound and collared enemies of Islam seem to have been particular favorites of Sultan Iltutmish, the pious warrior. They are unique in appearing also on his ca. 1235 tomb behind the qibla of the northernmost part of his extension of the mosque and on the 1231 mausoleum for his son, Nasir al-Din Mahmud, some five kilometers to the west of the mosque. The two Qur'anic selections are brilliantly juxtaposed. The first passage inveighs against cowardice in the face of a powerful and experienced enemy (the Rajputs); the second presents the utter defeat and surrender of this enemy to whom the Rev-

elation had not been brought before and who are now overcome and shamefully bound. The pious warrior sultan, Iltutmish, is following the example of the Messenger Muhammad, sent to bring the Revelation to those who had not been warned. From its compelling reference to military struggle and victory we may infer that Iltutmish's maqsura in the expanded mosque was located directly in front of this arch.

The third arch, immediately to the north (and right) of Qutb al-Din's original qibla screen, linked it to Iltutmish's extension. Because of this special significance, it bears a historical epigraph dating it to 1223–24. But the greater part of its surface is inscribed with several Qur'anic selections (3: 18; 33: 40–44; 55: 1–3; and 9: 18–19). Together these passages set out key aspects of Islam: divine oneness, Muhammad's unique role as Messenger, God's power to protect human beings, God's infinite creative power, and the duties of prayer, belief, and right action.

The arch immediately to the south (and left) of Qutb al-Din's screen provides a promise of paradise, a statement of divine omnipotence, and references to the Ka'ba in Mecca, the importance of pilgrimage, and the necessity of belief in the revelation (61: 12–13). Two citations, both from the third chapter (3: 1–4 and 96–102) also appear. To reinforce their proclamation of the final Revelation and their warning not to fall into disbelief by adhering to old faiths, the arch also includes hadith relating to the importance of prayer and a fragmentary hadith pointedly referring to outsiders: "(The Prophet), peace be on him said, '... non-Arabs, none can acquire excellence except through righteousness.'"

The second south arch presents some of the *asmā' al-husnā*, and through selections from three chapters (9: 112; 35: 1–2; 35: 7–12; 3: 132–36; 3: 146–50) largely focuses on the themes of divine creative power, human submission to it, the punishment awaiting those who disbelieve, and God's mercy and forgiveness.

The third, southernmost arch of the south extension returns to chapter Nuh in which Noah warns those who do not serve God (71: 1–5). Verses 6–9 are then omitted, even though they continue this theme with powerful descriptive language. Perhaps there was insufficient space, but it is more likely that it was important to move on to the second theme, namely, an expression of divine creative power and an enumeration of God's blessings in 71: 10–18. On the same arch are verses from chapter al-Isra' (17: 1–6 and 10–12). 17: 1–5 had already been used on the central arch of

Qutb al-Din's screen to refer to the first sultan's victory over the Rajput confederacy in the second battle of Tarain. With notable success Iltutmish had continued this struggle to expand the *dār al-Islām* into the *dār al-ḥarb*. With its actual reference to the Bani Isra'īl, verse 17: 6 must have seemed a striking metaphoric reference to the power, wealth, and population of the non-Muslim opponents of Iltutmish: "Then We gave you once again your turn against them, and We aided you with wealth and children and made you more in soldiery." The comparison is emphasized by the addition of 17: 10–12, since this selection begins by threatening disbelievers with a "painful doom" and then asserts the divine power that they neglect to acknowledge.

These citations are the finale to the epigraphs that Iltutmish added to the original qibla. They deserve close scrutiny, not only for their content but also for the light they may shed on the reasons behind their selection. Through their references they sum up the sultan's achievement and his place in the Sultanate's history. Iltutmish had spent much of his reign consolidating the military and administrative achievements of Qutb al-Din. He had repulsed Mongol incursions and suppressed vassals who had withdrawn their allegiance after Qutb al-Din's death. Hindu power in northern India had been humbled, just as the Bani Isra'īl, cited in the Qur'an, had been overcome by a "people of mighty prowess." Those who knew the Qur'an would have been so aware of verse 17: 7 (used neither on Qutb al-Din's nor Iltutmish's screen) that it was not necessary to inscribe it. They bore it in their memories:

(Saying): If ye do good, ye do good for your own souls, and if ye do evil, it is for them (in like manner). So, when the time for the second (of the judgments) came, (We roused against you others of Our slaves) to ravage you, and to enter the Temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting.

Of the twenty-two sets of Qur'anic inscriptions on Iltutmish's qibla screen, twenty-one are new, used here for the first time in the new Sultanate of Delhi.⁵⁰ That he or his theologian chose to repeat verses 17: 1–5 from Qutb al-Din's central arch underscores its importance. This is the only instance in which Iltutmish's additions repeat an inscription already employed on Qutb al-Din's screen. The Ghurids' victory was the victory of God and Muslims ("slaves of Ours," as God

refers to them in 17: 5) that laid the basis for the Sultanate and that offered non-believers the opportunity to accept Islam.

THE TOMB OF SULTAN ILTUTMISH

The sultan died in 633 (1236), and his tomb is located at the northwest corner of his extension of the qibla screen.⁵¹ Square in ground plan, the building measures fourteen meters on a side. It was originally domed and has entrances on the south, east, and north sides (fig. 7). Exterior facing that may have carried inscriptions is no longer extant, but the mausoleum's interior walls are richly adorned with passages from the Qur'an and hadith, which make it one of the most densely inscribed surfaces anywhere in the Islamic world.

A total of thirty different Qur'anic selections line the interior. A visitor was intended to begin with the east wall, which was opposite the qibla and accordingly provided the primary entrance into the mosque. The inscriptions were meant to be read in sequence and

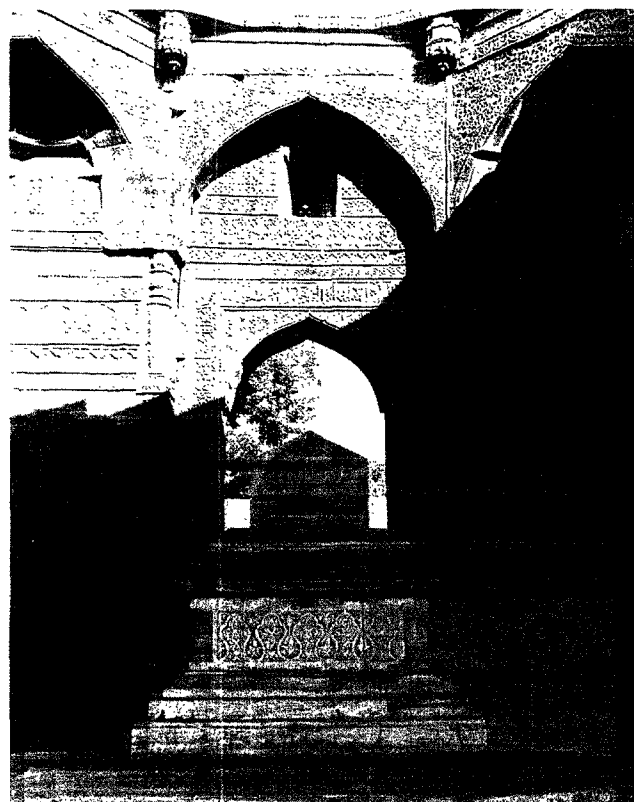


Fig. 7. Interior, tomb of Iltutmish, ca. 1235, view to north. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

counterclockwise: verses from chapter Ya Sin (36: 1–11) provide the key as to how it should be read. On the north side of the east entrance are the first two verses of the chapter (36: 1–2), which subsequently connects to the east side of the north entrance (36: 3–4), to the west side of the north entrance (36: 5–6), over the main mihrab on the west wall (36: 7–8), then to a band west of the south entrance (36: 9) and a band east of the south entrance (36: 10 and the first three words of 36: 11). The final words of 36: 11 occur to the south of the entrance in the east wall. Thus there is a complete sequence of chapter 36: 1–11 wrapping around the interior at the same eye level: visitors to the tomb first face the mosque (and the back of its qibla) and then turn to the left in a complete circle until they are back where they started. The inscriptions in the tomb give spatial direction and bind the four walls together. The words referring to the Qur'an and to those who heed its message are on the east side facing toward the mosque, while the words of warning and punishment directed toward non-believers are on the walls facing the world beyond the mosque. These words from chapter Ya Sin had also been used on the great minar. They appear on the 1231 tomb of Nasir al-Din Mahmud, too. With their explicit reference to the Qur'an and to the capture and bondage of unbelievers, they must have seemed particularly apt to the rulers of the early Sultanate.

The initial verses of three other chapters are on the east wall, but they are not continued on the other walls. Two of the selections had already been used on the mosque's qibla screen: Chapter al-Fath (48: 1–5) is a promise of paradise to believers; chapter al-Isra' (17: 1–4) begins with the description of the *mi'rāj* of the Prophet and continues with references to the scripture given to Moses; and chapter al-Qadr (97: 1–3) focuses on the power of the Revelation, a regular theme throughout the Delhi mosque complex and singularly appropriate in a land where the great majority of the population were not People of the Book:

Lo! We revealed it on the Night of Power.

Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is!

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

The last four verses from chapter al-An'am (6: 162–165) focus on monotheism and divine omnipotence and complete the east wall. The final verse must have seemed especially appropriate for sultan Iltutmish

whose reputation for piety was noted by contemporary and later chroniclers.

He it is who hath placed you as viceroys of the earth and hath exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He hath given you. Lo! Thy Lord is swift in prosecution, and lo! He verily is Forgiving, Merciful.

Chapter Nuh begins on the north wall (71: 1–4), continues on the east wall (71: 5 to the first four words of 71: 7), and ends on the north wall again (remaining words of 71: 7). It is largely a warning to those who do not listen to God's prophet, and like chapter Ya Sin this passage links the interior's walls with a sustained message of warning to disbelievers. During his long rule Iltutmish had vigorously expanded the Sultanate and had seen at first hand the reluctance of the Hindu population to accept the new faith. Thus the particularly powerful image in 71: 7 may have seemed to the sultan and the Muslim ruling class like a prophetic description of the conquered peoples of northern India:

And lo! whenever I call unto them that Thou mayst pardon them they thrust their fingers in their ears and cover themselves with their garments and persist (in their refusal) and magnify themselves in pride.

In a more poignant and personal reference, 71: 4 from the north wall was repeated on the south wall. Its words of forgiveness were especially appropriate for the tomb of the sultan:

That He may forgive you somewhat of your sins and respite you to an appointed term. Lo! the term of Allah, when it cometh, cannot be delayed, if ye but knew.

Three other themes are limited to the north wall: the obligations of Muslim believers (chapter 23: 1–21), the oneness of Allah (chapter 112: 1–4), and the already cited passages from chapters 71 and 36) that warn disbelievers of the punishments awaiting them.

The west wall supports the tomb's most extensive epigraphic program, and in keeping with their location on the qibla, the Qur'anic selections focus on the theme of faith rather than warnings and punishment. On the qibla's three mihrabs appear passages dealing with the revelation (chapter 20: 1–12; chapter 56: 77–80), the promise of paradise (chapter 18: 107–10; chapter 61: 12), prayer (chapter 3: 38) and Allah's power to take life (chapter 2: 155–56; chapter 3: 143–46). These last verses are notably relevant to Islam's

situation in northern India, since they deal not only with death and the hereafter but also with martyrdom:

And verily ye used to wish for death before ye met it (in the field). Now ye have seen it with your eyes!

Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dieth or is slain, ye will turn back on your heels? He who turneth back on his heels doth no hurt to Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful.

No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed. Whoso desireth the reward of the world, We bestow on him thereof; and whoso desireth the reward of the Hereafter, We bestow on him thereof. We shall reward the thankful.

And with how many a prophet have there been a number of devoted men who fought (beside him). They quailed not for aught that befell them in the way of Allah, nor did they weaken, nor were they brought low. Allah loveth the steadfast.

Muslim ghazis had brought the jihad to India, and martyrdom with its promise of immediate paradise was a powerful force behind its expansion. Verse 3: 144 in particular had been recited by Abu Bakr after the Prophet's death, and its use here could be seen as an implicit comparison between the Prophet and the deceased sultan, celebrated for his piety and for his devotion to the sunna.

Above and beside the three mihrabs are many Qur'anic selections focusing on a number of different themes. Two verses from 55: 26–27 speak of the ephemeral nature of life as opposed to the eternity of Allah, while the Throne Verse (2: 255) asserts the fact of divine omnipotence. God as unique and all-powerful judge is presented in two selections from chapter 3: 17–18 and 25–26. The obligations of belief are set out in chapter 2: 278–79. Verses 59: 22–23 appear twice on the qibla, each time in association with all or many of the *asmā' al-ḥusnā*, and may well indicate the influence of Hanafi/Maturidi thought at the sultan's court:

He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Knower of the Invisible and the Visible. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.

He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the

Superb. Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)!

Those who deny the role of the Messenger, as the Hindus and Jains were doing in not accepting Islam, are described in a single verse, 3: 184: "And if they deny thee, even so did they deny messengers who were before thee, who came with miracles and with the Psalms and with the Scripture giving light." To drive this point home, the non-Muslim population of northern India is addressed even more explicitly through the example of the prophet Abraham in 16: 120–23:

Lo! Abraham was a nation obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the idolaters;

Thankful for His bounties; He chose him and He guided him unto a straight path.

And We gave him good in the world, and in the Hereafter he is among the righteous.

And afterward We inspired thee (Muhammad, saying): Follow the religion of Abraham, as one by nature upright. He was not of the idolaters.

After all, it was Abraham who had rejected the idolatry in which he had been brought up, had become a devout and fervent monotheist, and had built the Ka'ba in Mecca, the first temple to Allah in Arabia, just as the early jami' masjid of Delhi was the first temple to God in northern India.

The *naskhī* inscription over the octagonal zone of transition begins, as did 36: 1–11, over the east wall and ends over the south wall. It presents all of chapter al-Mulk (67: 1–30) with its vivid depictions of Allah's creative and sustaining powers, the warning presented to the world through the revelation, and the eternal pains awaiting disbelievers. Above the zone of transition was the base of the dome, only a fragment of which survives over the south entrance. It bears a *naskhī* inscription containing portions of two verses 3: 26–27:

... Thou withdrawest [sovereignty] from whom Thou wilt. Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt. In Thy hand is the good. Lo! Thou art Able to do all things.

Thou causest the night to pass into the day, and Thou causest the day to pass into the night. And Thou bringest forth the living from the dead, and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living....

If, as seems most plausible, the inscription immediately under the dome also supported verses from a

single chapter and this inscription also began on the east and ended on the south side, then this fragment represents the conclusion of a lengthy selection from the third chapter which ought to have run from verses 3: 1–28. In that case the dome's base would have presented one of the Qur'an's strongest statements of divine power and the beauty of paradise (both utterly suitable for their placement in the sultan's tomb) as well as one of the most powerful indictments of the disbelief and idolatry that the pious sultan had been determined to root out. In essence, themes articulated throughout the tomb would have been summed up in the dome's base.

THE ALAI DARWAZA

The Alai Darwaza is located at the southeast corner of Ilutmish's extension of the mosque and is a square domed building measuring 10.5 meters on each of its internal sides; its walls are 3.4 meters thick. The highest point of the dome is 10.7 meters from the floor. It is

a massive gate into the mosque to its north (fig. 8). Arched entranceways with a spear-head decorative design lead into the building on the east, west, and south sides; a visitor moves from the gate's interior into the mosque through the north entrance which has a distinctly different, trefoil decorative design. The gateway is faced with red sandstone and marble and is densely inscribed on both the interior and exterior.⁵² It is the sole remaining gateway of four that were to have led into the third great expansion of the mosque. Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad Shah Khalji (1296–1316) briefly extended the rule of the Delhi Sultanate into central and southern India, and his campaign of conquest and expansion was accompanied by large-scale temple looting and "idol" destruction in the Deccan and the south. Medieval India's greatest poet in Persian, Amir Khusraw Dihlawi (1253–1325), described the destruction of the main temple of Birdhul with its golden "idol" in April 1311, and stated that much gold and many valuable jewels fell into the hands of the Muslims who destroyed all the temples at Birdhul



Fig. 8. Exterior, Alai Darwaza, jami' masjid complex, ca. 1311. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

and placed the plunder in the public treasury.⁵³

The golden temple of Ma'bar also fell to the Muslim army,⁵⁴ and the great wealth that 'Ala' al-Din carried away from the gutted Hindu temples was to pay for his massive building program at the early jami' masjid: the program of expansion included an additional nine-arched qibla screen to the north of Iltutmish's extensions, a minar the surviving base of which on the mosque's north indicates that it would have been twice the size of the existing minar, a new enclosing arcade that would have bounded an area more than three times the size of Iltutmish's mosque, and four massive gateways, one on the north, two on the east, and one on the south side. Of this grandiose project only the gateway on the south side was ever completed. It was accordingly the destruction of "infidel" temples that not only paid for but also became the main theme of this southern gateway, now known as the Alai Darwaza, into what was to have been the enormously enlarged jami' masjid.

Most notably, the vast conquests and destruction in the south appear to have been interpreted as one of the later destructions described in chapter al-Isra' (17: 4-9), for the verses that had not been used in the inscriptions done for Qutb al-Din and Iltutmish are included on the Alai Darwaza. To make certain that the reference was not lost on those entering the gateway, verses 7-9 are even repeated twice on the south side (the principal entrance through the gate), first on the exterior south face of the main entrance, and again on the interior of the south wall:

(Saying): If ye do good, ye do good for your own souls, and if ye do evil, it is for them (in like manner). So, when the time for the second (of the judgments) came (We roused against you others of Our slaves) to ravage you, and to enter the Temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting.

It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if ye repeat (the crime) We shall repeat (the punishment), and We have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers.

Lo! this Qur'an guideth unto that which is straightest, and giveth tidings unto the believers who do good works that theirs will be a great reward.

Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Khalji apparently saw himself as the one who was signally fulfilling God's prophecy, and the cited verses also contain the threat of further

punishment for those who do not obey. This concept is further strengthened on the exterior south face by the use of chapter 9: 104-07.

A Persian inscription on a marble architrave framing the entrance includes an honorific description of 'Ala' al-Din Khalji that reinforces these Qur'anic selections: "...the demolisher of the foundation of the places of idol worship, the exalter of the foundation of congregations of Islam."⁵⁵ Most of the exterior south façade's remaining Qur'anic inscriptions appear to have been carefully chosen to offer a combination of themes that praise believers and also condemn non-believers. Chapter 13: 23-35, for instance, promises paradise for firm believers, while it curses those who break Allah's covenant. Chapter 2: 127-132 records Abraham's prayer while building the Ka'ba and invokes Allah's mercy and guidance on those who submit. Chapter 3: 95-99 again speaks of Abraham and the religious obligation of pilgrimage to the Ka'ba at Mecca, but here it warns non-Muslims not to drive the believers from the path of Allah. Chapter 38: 50-54 offers the promise of paradise, while chapter 14: 31 warns of the Last Judgment.

Those who selected the Qur'anic passages intended that the gateway's walls should be read thematically and together: if the south wall focuses on belief and disbelief, the western and eastern façades share the common themes of paradise, pilgrimage, success against non-believers, Allah's mercy, the truth of the Revelation, and the benefits of prayer. The eastern wall's chapter 13: 35-38 begins with an evocation of paradise, and the theme is continued with chapter 50: 31-35. The western wall's chapter 4: 122-123 begins with a similar vision of paradise promised by God to believers: "But as for those who believe and do good works, We shall bring them into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. It is a promise from Allah in truth; and who can be more merciful than Allah in utterance?"

A Persian panegyric inscription on the gateway's western arch describes the mosque as "a second Ka'ba,"⁵⁶ a similitude of pilgrimage that is also continued in the selections on the west and east façades. On the west is a single verse from chapter 9: 19:

Count ye the slaking of a pilgrim's thirst and tendance of the Inviolable Place of Worship as (equal to the worth of) him who believeth in Allah and the Last Day, and striveth in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.

On the east are four verses from chapter 5: 97–100, the first one refers to the Ka'ba:

Allah hath appointed the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a standard for mankind, and the Sacred Month and the offerings and the garlands. That is so that ye may know that Allah knoweth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and that Allah is Knower of all things.

The role of Muhammad and the Revelation is stressed on the west with chapter 48: 28–29 and on the east with chapter 2: 285–86 and chapter 7: 31–35.⁵⁷ Two citations appear on all three exterior walls, and their prominence indicates that they must have been viewed as especially apt. The first is a well-known and widely used hadith, also appearing on the prayer screen of the jami' masjid, which is appropriate in defining the rewards of patronage: "Whoever built for Allah a mosque got a house built for him in paradise." More unusual, a single verse from chapter 72: 18 is repeated three times on the east, twice on the south, and once on the west, and its particular pertinence for the Muslim minority (and particularly the new Muslims, converted from Hinduism) ruling the non-Muslim majority is obvious: "And the places of worship are only for Allah, so pray not unto anyone along with Allah."

The interior of the Alai Darwaza (fig. 9) contains quotations from only two chapters, 48: 1–9 and 17: 1–12. Beginning on the north wall, which leads into the mosque itself, and continuing horizontally on the west, south, and east walls, these two lengthy selections are placed one above the other. The nine verses from chapter 48 wrap around the upper part of each wall and the twelve verses from chapter 17 around the lower. The designers of these epigraphic interiors also intended them to make sense vertically, since each wall bears discreet themes. The north wall reiterates two of the main themes in the mosque: the victory of Islam (48: 1–4) and the importance of pilgrimage (17: 1–4). Unlike the south exterior façade that promises a dire fate to the non-believers outside its door, the interior north wall contains messages of victory and success for believers. The interior west (qibla) wall repeats its exterior's themes of paradise (48: 4–5) and victory (17: 4–6) with a description of the ravaging of the territory and the temple of the idolaters. Paradise, belief in Allah, and punishment for unbelievers are the key themes (48: 6–9 and 17: 9–11) of the interior east wall, as well as of its exterior. The interior south wall predicts awful punishments for disbelievers (48:

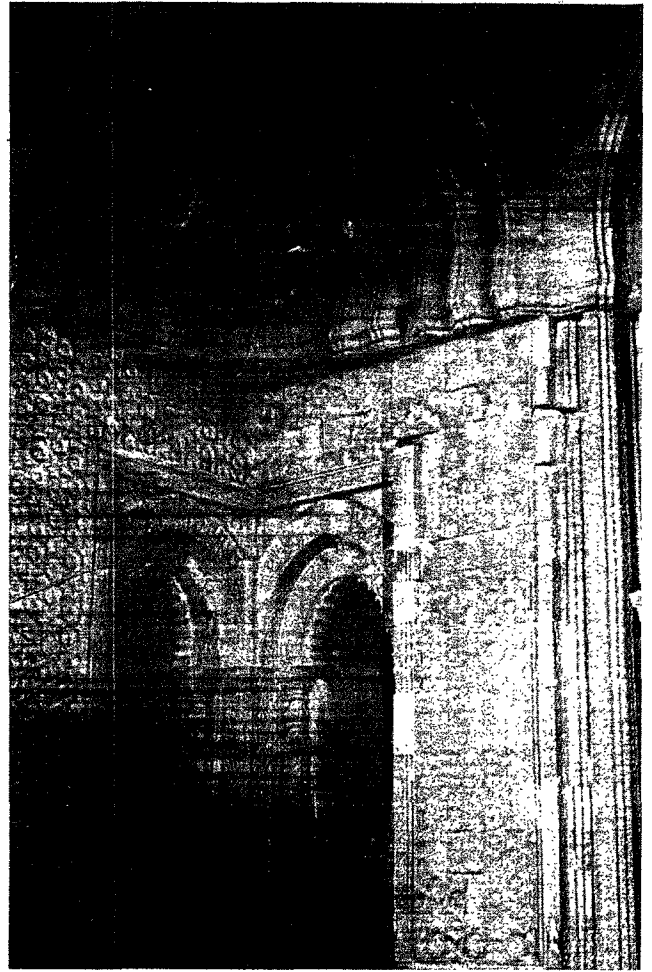


Fig. 9. Interior, Alai Darwaza, jami' masjid complex, ca. 1311. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

5–6) and repeats the key passage, describing the second destruction of the temple and threatening unbelievers with fearful punishments, from chapter 17: 7–9. As has been noted, this passage is also inscribed on the exterior south wall that framed the main approach into the enlarged mosque. Important enough to be repeated here, this Qur'anic selection is, however, significantly and appropriately absent from any of the inscriptions done under Qutb al-Din and Iltutmish. Those who selected the inscriptions for the earlier portions of the jami' masjid did not use this passage referring to the second temple destruction, since it did not fit their particular message, while the later epigraphic designers specifically chose to put it on both sides of the south wall of the gate: to them and their

contemporaries chapter 17: 7–9 must have seemed a clear confirmation of divine guidance and the unfolding of the divine plan.

THE TOMB OF NASIR AL-DIN MAHMUD

Two major buildings done under Iltutmish's patronage lie outside the confines of the early jami' masjid of Delhi. The first is the tomb of his son and heir apparent who died before him; the second is the so-called Arhai-din-ka-jhompra masjid in Ajmer, an important center of Mu'izzi power. Both structures are significantly inscribed, and an analysis of them may test some of the hypotheses and conclusions we have advanced about the epigraphic program of the Delhi mosque.

Sultan Iltutmish's son, Nasir al-Din Mahmud, died in 1231, according to an Arabic inscription on the marble gateway of the prince's tomb that identifies the sultan as the patron in the year 629 (1231–32).⁵⁸

Located about five kilometers to the southwest of the early jami' masjid of Delhi, the square building resembles a fortress and served as the center of a madrasa community that survived well into the Mughal era. A broad flight of steps leads from the stony ground up to the marble-framed entrance (fig. 10). It and the mihrab are the two areas that are inscribed.

Three epigraphs frame the entrance. The first is utterly familiar and must have had special meaning for the Mu'izzis: chapter 9: 18–19. It is inscribed in a *naskhī* script and also appears on Qutb al-Din's qibla screen in Delhi, Iltutmish's extension of that screen, the qibla screen at the Ajmer mosque, and on his own tomb. The two verses not only lay down the requirements of the faith but also speak of pilgrimage and belief, suggesting that these early religious edifices were intended from the outset as pilgrims' destinations.

Framing this inscription is a second Qur'anic citation, the first nine verses of chapter 6: 1–9. It is also widely used: we have found it on Iltutmish's extension

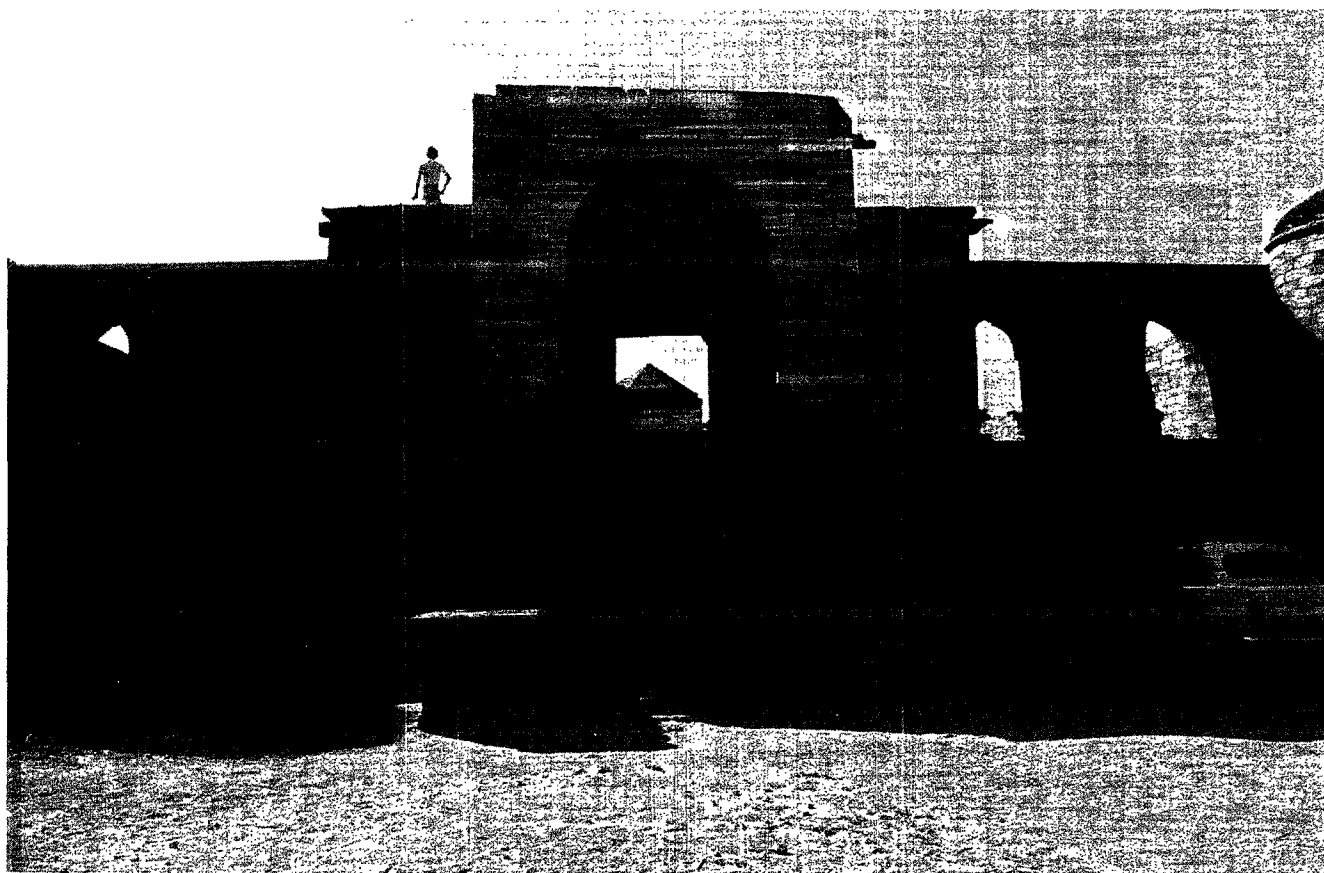


Fig. 10. East gate, tomb of Nasir al-Din Mahmud, 1231. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

of the qibla screen in Delhi and on his tomb. With its message of warning to non-believers and its vivid image of their subjugation, it must have seemed to the sultan a particularly appropriate reference.

Finally, a third selection from the Qur'an completes the gateway's entrance inscriptions. Beginning with the celebrated Throne Verse, three verses from chapter 2: 255–257 present an image of divine rule that must have functioned as a metaphor of earthly kingship. The Throne Verse was favored by Ilutmish, since it appears on his extension of the Delhi minar and in his tomb, and it was to become the most widely used inscription on royal objects and buildings throughout the Islamic world. Here, however, it is combined with two subsequent verses that are far less frequently used:

There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower.

Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

The purpose here is to provide another warning to non-Muslims that an awful fate awaits them, if they do not freely reject their past belief and accept Islam.

On the doorway's marble lintel is written in Kufic a single verse (3: 26) that has not appeared before in Sultanate inscriptions: "Say: O Allah! Owner of Sovereignty! Thou givest sovereignty unto whom Thou wilt, and Thou withdrawest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt. Thou exaltest..."

Its reference to sovereignty befits the tomb of the sultan's son and heir to his kingdom, of course, as does its placement on the entrance gate, rendered even more royal by the use of marble. But it may have a wider meaning as well and allude to the change of sovereignty in northern India and the replacement of Hindu kings by Muslims. Immediately above it is inscribed in *naskhī* letters one of the Muslim creeds: "There is no god but God, the King, the Truth, the Manifest; Muhammad is the Prophet of God, the truthful, the trusty." Both of these inscriptions were also used on the tomb of Ilutmish, built some four years later.

The only other inscribed area of the tomb is the mihrab, which carries some of the *asmā' al-husnā* and

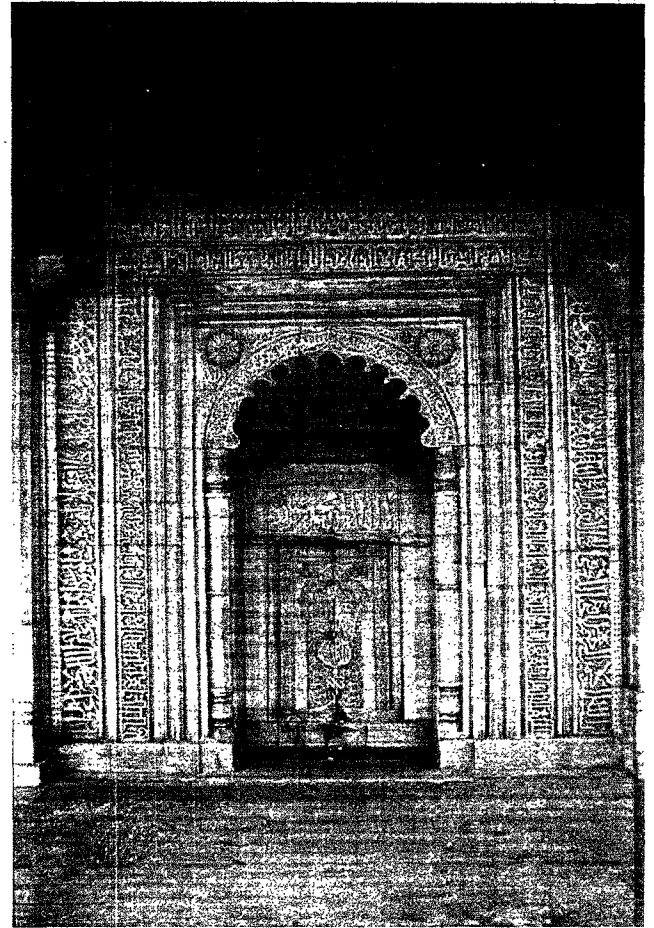


Fig. 11. Mihrab, tomb of Nasir al-Din Mahmud, 1231. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

verses from five different chapters (fig. 11). Above the mihrab is written the profession of faith. On the mihrab arch is inscribed a single verse, chapter 72: 18, that must have seemed particularly appropriate to the first generation of Muslims, keenly aware of India's many deities and the temptation that new converts into Islam might have to return to worship them: "And the places of worship are only for Allah, so pray not unto anyone along with Allah."

Around the mihrab arch is a somewhat longer inscription (67: 1–2, incomplete) that asserts divine powers of creation. On the arch over the mihrab are the two verses (3: 96–97, incomplete):⁵⁹

Lo! The first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Becca [Mecca], a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples;

Wherein are plain memorials (of Allah's guidance); the place where Abraham stood up to pray; and whosoever entereth it is safe. And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither...

The final sentence is omitted: "As for him who disbelieveth, (let him know that) lo! Allah is Independent of (all) creatures." This conspicuous reference to non-Muslims is omitted from the prayer wall, but is its absence intentional? Such an hypothesis of meaningful omission should be further tested. Written in Kufic around the mihrab is a second selection (3: 18–19) with a significant omission:

Allah (Himself) is witness that there is no God save Him. And the angels and the men of learning (too are witness). Maintaining His creation in justice, there is no God save Him, the Almighty, the Wise.

Lo! religion with Allah (is) The Surrender (to His will and guidance).

Here is the omitted portion of verse 19:

Those who (formerly) received the Scripture differed only after knowledge came unto them, through transgression among themselves. Whoso disbelieveth the revelations of Allah (will find that) lo! Allah is swift at reckoning.

It is a direct reference to disbelievers and their punishment. Verse 19 also appears on the qibla wall of Iltutmish's tomb, where the final sentence, the most direct reference to non-believers, is left out, too.

Two further inscriptions embellish the mihrab area of the tomb. The first is a listing of eleven of the *asmā' al-husnā*. The second consists of chapter 48: 1–5 in *naskhī*. We have seen 48: 1–5 already on Qutb al-Din's qibla screen in Delhi and on Iltutmish's tomb. In neither instance is 48: 6 used. However, verse 48: 6 does occur on the Delhi minar. Here is this verse that was intentionally omitted from the qiblas but was carefully included on the minar:

And may punish the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women, and the idolatrous men and the idolatrous women, who think an evil thought concerning Allah. For them is the evil turn of fortune, and Allah is wroth against them and hath cursed them, and hath made ready for them hell, a hapless journey's end.

The minar "spoke" to those beyond the mosque's walls, namely, the non-Muslim majority, and its reference to idolators was inscribed with conscious design. The

qibla inscriptions in the tomb of Nasir al-Din Mahmud, however, like those in Qutb al-Din's mosque and in Iltutmish's tomb, were planned for the Muslim minority praying and facing the qibla: they were more concerned with the results of prayer and the promise of paradise than with the fate meted out to idolators. The only epigraphs referring to disbelievers in the tomb of Nasir al-Din Mahmud occur in the entrance inscriptions which faced the outside world; and as we have noted, that area offers prominent references to sovereignty, a theme frequently associated with monumental gateways. Disbelievers are not mentioned on the qibla, and any mention of them appears to be deliberately avoided. Instead, the mihrab inside was dedicated to the needs and desires of believers through inscriptions that focussed on God's power to give and take life, pilgrimage, the centrality of monotheism and worship of the one God, and the promise of paradise for the faithful.

THE ARHAI-DIN-KA-JHOMPRA MOSQUE IN AJMER

Qutb al-Din's and Iltutmish's architectural patronage was not limited to the confines of Delhi,⁶⁰ and during the same period an even larger mosque was commissioned, the so-called Arhai-din-ka-jhompra masjid in Ajmer.⁶¹ Founded around 1100, the city of Ajmer in Rajasthan had fallen to Ghurid forces in 1192 soon after the second Battle of Tarain. One of the greatest of sufi saints, Mu'in al-Din Chishti, came to Ajmer from Iran in the same year, and his tomb, built around 1455, is a major Muslim place of pilgrimage. An Arabic inscription on the central mihrab combines the date of the mosque's construction (March–April 1199) with one of the Prophet's hadith.⁶² Writing during the reign of Iltutmish, Hasan Nizami credits Sultan Mu'izz al-Din with ordering the demolition of temples in Ajmer and the construction of mosques and madrasas from their ruins following the Battle of Tarain in 1192.⁶³

A historical inscription on the dome behind the mihrab gives an additional date for the construction of the original mosque as Dhu'l Hijja 596 (September–October 1200) and cites the builder, Abu Bakr b. Ahmad Khalu al-Hirawi. Two verses from chapter 9: 18–19 frame the mihrab and its arch and deal with the identification and obligations of believers. They appear, too, on Iltutmish's extension of Qutb al-Din's jami' masjid in Delhi. According to al-Bukhari, they were among the last chapters to be revealed, and 'Ali b. Abi Talib was instructed to recite them in order to

prohibit pagan worship at the Ka'ba.⁶⁴ With their identification of the obligations of believers, they offer a powerful historical allusion: the older religious sites of Ajmer had been recently destroyed, in effect preventing Hindus and Jains from worshipping where Muslims now gathered in prayer. They are followed by a hadith that also focuses on prayer: "Be timely with your prayer before (the time for it) goes by, and be timely with repentance before death (takes you)."

In 627 (1229–30) Sultan Iltutmish ordered the construction of a qibla façade for the Ajmer mosque, similar to its counterpart in Delhi but consisting of seven arches (fig. 12). Two small minars, both now badly damaged, top the central arch. The screen is also heavily inscribed, though its epigraphic program is less extensive than that in the Qutb mosque in Delhi. The Ajmer inscriptions are restricted in location to the right-hand (north) minar and to the central and two flanking arches.

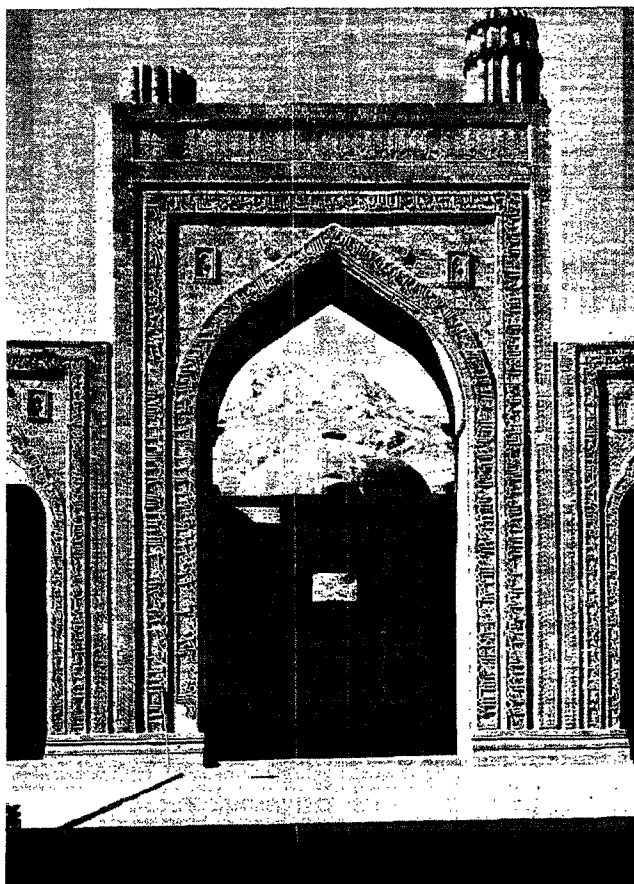


Fig. 12. Central arch of qibla screen, Arhai-din-ka-jhompra mosque, Ajmer. (Photo: Catherine B. Asher)

On the northern minar remnant are two inscriptions. On the lower half is a historical record in *naskhī* script that identifies Iltutmish as the patron.⁶⁵ On the upper half is a citation from chapter 41: 31–34 that emphasizes God's protection, the importance of prayer, the value of submission to God, and the need for forgiveness. This citation does not appear in the early *jami'* masjid of Delhi.

On the arch flanking the right (north) side of the central arch is a historical inscription citing the individual who may have been the scribe, 'Ali Ahmad. There are also six verses from chapter 49: 1–6 that focus on proper decorum and on wise behavior. These verses also do not appear on the Delhi mosque. According to al-Bukhari, these verses refer to the controversy between Abu Bakr and 'Umar over the appointment of the governor of the Banu Tamim. They instruct the two to defer to the Prophet's judgment. In this light, the presence of these verses may allude to the controversy surrounding the governance of Ajmer, which Qutb al-Din had assigned to Rai Pithora's son. A second Qur'anic citation, however, is one of the most widely used, namely, the first four verses of chapter 17, which present the Prophet's *mi'rāj* and describe the faithlessness of the children of Israel. They also embellish Qutb al-Din's qibla screen, Iltutmish's extension of it, and Iltutmish's tomb.

The screen's central arch is inscribed, like the flanking arches, in Kufic, *naskhī*, and *thuluth* scripts. Unlike the original *jami'* masjid in Delhi that was built under the patronage of Qutb al-Din, the central arch does not present a citation from the Qur'an. Instead, it gives pride of place to the sultan and patron himself, and bears a very lengthy historical inscription in his praise:

This construction has been ordered by the sultan, the high, the just, the exalted, the most high shahanshah, the master of the necks of nations, the lord of the kings of the Turks and the Persians, the shadow of God on earth, Shams al-Dunya wa'l-Din, the refuge of Islam and of Muslims, the crown of kings and of sultans, the subjugator of infidels and of heretics, the vanquisher of transgressors and of polytheists, the defender of Islam, the elevation of the triumphant empire and the brilliant nation, the possessor of victory, the amir of the continent, the sovereign of the sea ... the sultan of the East, the fortified by God, the (one who is) victorious over his enemies, Abu'l-Muzaffar Iltutmish al-Sultani, the helper of the caliph of God, the defender of the amir of the believers, may God elevate his position and make

his proof to appear at all times. This (has been completed) on the twentieth of Rabi' II of the year....

The flanking arch to the left (south) of the central arch is provided with two Qur'anic selections. Six verses from chapter 25: 61–66 exalt God and urge pious and modest behavior from the faithful.⁶⁶ The other passage is chapter 59: 21–24. It also appears in the tomb of Iltutmish in Delhi and focuses on the names of God, a key point of Maturidi doctrine. Thus the content of the inscriptions on the Ajmer screen turns essentially to the same themes as those at Delhi. Two Qur'anic selections (25: 61–66 and 17: 1–4) at Ajmer were obviously particular favorites, either of Sultan Iltutmish or of the person responsible for choosing the inscriptions, since they appear on Qutb al-Din's original qibla screen in Delhi, Iltutmish's extension of it, and on the Ajmer mosque.⁶⁷ With their themes of revelation, submission to divine power, and the history of the Children of Israel, they underscore the new social and religious order that the Mu'izzi rulers had brought to northern India.

The epigraphs also offer guidance in the practice of the faith, for they instruct the believer to walk modestly, spend the night in prayer, beg to be spared from Hell, maintain regular prayers, pay the poor rate, and conduct righteous actions. Finally, there are some more direct allusions to the actual structure. The use of the first verses of chapter al-Isra' suggests a parallel between Ajmer and sacred sites in Jerusalem and Mecca. Chapter 9: 18 speaks of those who attend God's sanctuaries, while verse 25: 64 refers to prayer itself. And the mosque's builders refer to the Qur'anic inscriptions themselves on the mosque's qibla with 59: 21, which speaks of a Qur'an descending to humankind.

WORDS AND MEANINGS

For many centuries India had been a land of immigration, remarkable for its ability to absorb newcomers, and this capacity was a vital asset for governance under the sultans. Muslims were no longer simply raiding and looting northern India; they were striving to create an Islamic society. In this endeavor, however, they were confronted by a "folk of mighty prowess" who were vast in number and far different in religion from the Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians with whom Muslims had earlier been in contact. They did not accept Islam with anything like the alacrity of the non-believers in the lands to the west, and the

Sultanate of Delhi had to depend far more upon the immigration of people of skill and knowledge than upon rapid conversion.

The inscriptions of the Delhi jami' masjid and associated buildings were designed to proclaim Islam's domination and new dominion. They were also selected within the framework of the Hanafi *madhhab*. Since Qutb al-Din had been raised in the home of a Hanafi jurist and educated with his sons, he was familiar not only with the Qur'an but also with contemporary Hanafi doctrine. Bearing three dates over a seven-year period from 1192 to 1199, the jami' masjid was built during a period of immigration of Muslims from lands to the west. The city's population was diverse, including not only soldiers, but also Muslim merchants, scribes, artisans, and notables, and this migration increased substantially after the Mongol onslaught into Central Asia and Iran began. But initially the core population would have been the army, who settled with their families in and around Delhi and other towns with grants of lands. The army's legal and spiritual guidance would have come from its qadi who, like al-Juzjani's father, must have been Hanafi. It was the army qadi, perhaps also appointed as qadi of Delhi, who would have had the requisite knowledge and authority to provide advice on the inscriptions to be used on the jami' masjid, where he also officiated.

Al-Juzjani's work is infused with awareness that God's plan is unfolding in the new Sultanate in India, a view of history that he must have shared with his father. God was present, closer to human beings "than their jugular veins," and was guiding them in what was the greatest expansion of the *dār al-Islām* since the seventh and eighth centuries. The chapters of God's Book resonated throughout their daily lives, and events were unfolding as part of a divine plan that human beings could sometimes perceive in the eternal words of the Qur'an. What might have appeared to be a disaster, like the Hindu victory in the first battle of Tarain, turned out to be a demonstration of God's authority and intent after the stunning defeat of the Rajput confederacy a year later. Scholars could find the evidence of divine omniscience and foreknowledge in the words of chapters like al-Isra' and al-Fath. For the threatened and insecure Sultanate with its tiny population, such proofs were of the utmost importance, and because they had enduring resonance for generations of patrons, they were repeated on monuments and reapplied to fit different occasions. They justified Muslim action, and they were a security, deposited by

God for the reassurance of the community. So, it was essential that the Qur'an, with its capacity to explain the past and present and its potential to reveal the future, be made visible and serve as a sermon in stone providing the most relevant texts, whether or not the community was present. It needed to take on monumental form in keeping with the grandeur of the Book. Set up in centers of authority and population, like Delhi and Ajmer, the Word needed to face the faithful and to tower above the nonbelievers. Even if most people could not read the passages, the words were still there, forms that surpassed in beauty and meaning any figural imagery.

In a normative culture it was necessary to set out how people should live. Thus the qibla screens in Delhi and Ajmer served as visual presentations of the Law. A righteous society rested on Qur'an, hadith, and shari'a. In a land that in the eyes of the newcomers did not possess a scripture, the new order of things had to be proclaimed, not only orally through the recitation of the Qur'an and through the disputations and explications of legal scholars, but also through the monumental rendering of God's Word. In no other period of Islamic history is monumental epigraphy so abundant, so strident, and so complex as it was here in a still largely Hindu and Jain environment. If the qibla screens looked like huge books held up before their communities, it was because they were.

Viewed in their entirety, the epigraphs on Qutb al-Din's mosque, the extensions and additions by Iltutmish, and those on the Ajmer mosque focus on several themes: divine power; the principles of Islam; the act of worship; the importance of actual mosque structures; and God's support for the faithful and His punishment of unbelievers, particularly through the references in chapter al-Isra' to the destruction of Israel and its temples. There is no specific reference on either the Delhi or Ajmer screens to idolators, the class of unbelievers most strongly attacked on the Delhi minar. Thus we could say that the two mosque screens use pointed references to expound more general religious statements, while the minar in its function as landmark and victory tower is the logical bearer of messages aimed directly at the conquered Hindus and Jains outside the mosque and the community of the faithful. In their prominent epigraphic form these messages underscore the vast distance separating Islam from these other faiths and their figural, hence idolatrous, arts. Even if the Delhi jami' masjid and minar had developed over more than a century and

under different patrons, inscriptions were intended to go in some places and not others, for different architectural elements required different epigraphs. Similarly, the two tombs were favored with passages promising forgiveness and paradise for the deceased.

To the designers and patrons of the early Delhi Sultanate architectural epigraphs had signal importance, as is evident when they are used again and again. Theological issues were of central significance and could be presented in architecture, as the use of the *asmā' al-husnā* on the minar and on the screen may suggest. The prominence of the Maturidi *kalām* and the Hanafi *madhhab* influenced the selection of epigraphs and would have been important for legal scholars and for the governing elite, but at our remove the reasons for selection are difficult to decipher. Contemporary political history also had a pronounced impact on the selection of appropriately metaphoric inscriptions, like those from the chapter al-Isra'. Such political allusions are probably easier for us to identify now than are the theological references.

Furthermore, these are not rote inscriptions. Instead, they identify those issues that were of central importance to the Delhi sultans and the Muslim ruling class. Whether we regard the architecture of the Ghurid homeland, of neighboring and influential Iran, or of the many dozens of later Sultanate and Mughal buildings with complex epigraphic programs, there is no instance of one building's inscriptions exactly repeating another. While individual Qur'anic passages or hadith may be used more than once (as we have seen here in the appearance of the initial verses of the chapter al-Fath on both the minar and mosque), in its totality each epigraphic scheme is unique. If it has content and function, then script on buildings was presumably meant to be read (at least by some of the devout) as well as to be seen. Its appearance, particularly in monumental Kufic and *thuluth* script styles, undoubtedly lent an aura of sanctity to a site, but it is also clear that God's words and those of Muhammad were carefully chosen in order to convey specific ideas of central importance to the patrons of architecture and to the wider community of the faithful. Not all of those who worshiped there could read the words, of course, but by analogy very few of their French contemporaries had any inkling of the intricate theology that gave intellectual and religious life to the figural sculptures of Chartres cathedral. Epigraphs—or, perhaps more accurately, epigraphic sculpture—functioned on levels dependent upon the worshipper's

capabilities and were designed to enhance religious life and elevate the soul.

University of Victoria
Victoria, B.C.

NOTES

Authors' note: The authors have individually received assistance in their research from one or more of the following sources which they gratefully acknowledge: the University of Victoria, its Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, its Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

- For the Dome of the Rock and its inscriptions, see S. D. Goitein, "The Historical Background of the Erection of the Dome of the Rock," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 70 (1950), esp. p. 106; Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 33–62; Erica C. Dodd, "The Image of the Word: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam," *Berytus* 18 (1969): 35–58; Miriam Rosen-Ayalon, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif, Jerusalem: An Iconographic Study* (1989); Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns, eds., *Bayt al-Maqdis, Part I: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, vol. 9 (1993); and Jeremy Johns, ed., *Bayt al-Maqdis, Part II: Jerusalem and Early Islam*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, vol. 9 (2000).
- India is not alone, of course, in having a Muslim ruling class governing a religiously mixed population and in favoring impressive monumental epigraphy. Spain under the Umayyads and Seljuq Anatolia with its rich pre-Islamic figural traditions offer history and monuments that could be usefully compared with early Sultanate buildings in northern India. Like the jami' masjid of Delhi, the Great Mosque of Cordoba is a creation over time, and both monuments experience successive enlargements to provide for gradually growing Muslim populations.
- Throughout this essay we refer to this first jami' masjid of Delhi as the "early" jami' masjid in order to distinguish it from Shah Jahan's great seventeenth-century jami' masjid in Delhi. Locally, the early jami' masjid is referred to as the Qutb mosque (a name derived either from the Iron Pillar or from the first sultan's name) or the Quwwat al-Islam mosque, a much later name of uncertain derivation.
- C. E. Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghur," *Central Asiatic Journal* 6 (1961): 132.
- C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), p. 94.
- R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 174.
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- Bosworth, "Ghazna," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (1965), 2: 1049–50.
- Daniel Schlumberger, "Le palais Ghaznevide de Lashkari Bazaar," *Syria* 29 (1952): 251–70. Daniel Schlumberger, et al., *Lashkari Bazar: une résidence royale ghaznevide et ghoride*, Mémoires de la délégation archéologique, 2 vols. (1963).
- J. Sourdél-Thomine, "Ghaznavids: Art and Monuments," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (1965), 2: 1054.
- The historical accounts of Ibn al-Athir and al-Juzjani confirm that Ghiyath al-Din in particular favored the Shafi'i madhhab under the influence of the Shafi'i faqih (legal scholar) Shaykh Wajih al-Din Abu'l-Fath Muhammad b. al-Marvarrudhi, who was critical of the Karamiyya. Bosworth discusses both accounts in "The Early Islamic History of Ghur," *Central Asiatic Journal* 6 (1961): 130–33.
- Minhaj al-Siraj al-Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, trans. H. G. Raverty as *Tabakat-i Nasiri: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia*, 2 vols. (1881; repr. New Delhi, 1971), pp. 449–51. The term Qarmatians loosely refers to Isma'ilis or various splinter groups of the Isma'ilis.
- K. A. Nizami, "The Ghurids," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), 4: 189.
- Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghur," p. 132.
- C. E. Bosworth, "Ghurids," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2: 1103.
- A. Maricq and G. Wiet, *Le Minar de Djam*, Mémoires de la délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1959).
- K. A. Nizami, "The Ghurids," p. 189.
- See Maricq and Wiet, *Minar de Djam*, pp. 69–70.
- M. J. Casimer and B. Glatzer, "Shah-i Maṣḥad: A Recently-Discovered Madrasa of the Ghurid Period in Gargistan (Afghanistan)," *East and West*, Rome [N.S.] 21 (1971): 53–68. For a brief summary of the site and reproduction of its plan, see Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, pp. 182 and 508.
- Juzjani, *Tabaqat*, p. 453.
- J. A. Page, *An Historical Memoir on the Qutb: Delhi*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, vol. 22 (Calcutta, 1926).
- Maricq and Wiet, *Minar de Djam*, p. 25.
- Ibid.*, pp. 26–28.
- Hebrew inscriptions have been found near Ghur that testify to the existence of Jewish colonies, which managed much of Ghurid trade. See André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Volume II, The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 135.
- The term Maturidi is derived from the tenth-century scholar al-Maturidi who wrote on the Hanafi tradition in Samarqand. Contemporary scholars even referred to this intellectual tradition as the doctrine of the "ulema of Samarqand" or the "ahl al-sunna wa'l-jam'a'a."
- Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 254 (no. 46).
- Al-Maturidi, *Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ibrahim 'Awadāyn and al-Sayyid 'Awadāyn, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1971).
- A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1965), pp. 2–3, and p. 246.

30. Abu'l-Qāsim Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa-'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1966).
31. K. A. Nizami, "The Ghurids," p. 42.
32. Ibid., p. 24.
33. Jūzjānī, *Tabaqāt*, p. 468.
34. Ibid., pp. 544–45.
35. Along with Samarqand, Bukhara also became a center of the Maturidi *kalām*, later favored by most Hanafi scholars opposed to the Ash'ari *kalām* of Shafi'i scholars. For more detailed analysis of the Maturidi presence and role in the Ghurid domains, see Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*; and Wilferd Madelung, "The Spread of Maturidism and the Turks," in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985).
36. Jūzjānī, *Tabaqāt*, p. 513.
37. Ibid., p. 598.
38. Ibid., pp. 598–99.
39. Several inscriptions provide dates for the construction of the mosque. On the east gate an inscription states that the amir, Qutb al-Din Aybak, built the mosque in 1191–92. On the north gate is a second inscription saying that the mosque was built by Sultan Mu'izz al-Din in 1197. On the central arch of the qibla screen is the date 1198–99, suggesting that the screen, which bears most of the building's inscriptions, was added to the original mosque at that time. Inscriptions on the minar mention the names and titles of Sultans Ghiyath al-Din and Mu'izz al-Din, while Nagari inscriptions on the minar give the date 1199, indicating that the minar and the screen were completed in the same year and that Hindu/Jain workers were employed in the complex's construction. Writing during the reign of Iltutmish (1206–35), Hasan Nizami credits Qutb al-Din with the construction of the jami' masjid at Delhi and with adorning it "with stones and gold obtained from the temples which had been demolished by elephants, and covered it with inscriptions in *tughra*, containing the divine commands" (Hasan Nizāmī in H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, 8 vols. [Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1963], 2: 222).
40. K. A. Nizami, "The Ghurids," p. 69.
41. Ibid., p. 76.
42. M. A. Husain, *A Record of All the Qur'anic and Non-Historical Epigraphs on the Protected Monuments in the Delhi Province*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 47 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1936) is an essential source for any study of Sultanate epigraphy. Historical inscriptions in the complex are published in Page, *Historical Memoir*. All quotations from the Qur'an are from Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976).
43. For Persian original and translation, see Page, *Historical Memoir*, p. 29. "Twenty-seven temples" may not reflect the actual scale of destruction, but instead the system of lunar mansions.
44. Jūzjānī, *Tabaqāt*, p. 456.
45. For translations of the Nagari inscriptions on the pillar, see Page, *Historical Memoir*, pp. 44–45.
46. Al-Bukhari cites the following hadith by Anas: "Verily, We have given you (O Muhammad) a signal victory," which refers to the al-Hudaybiya Peace treaty. Bukhārī, *Collection of the Hadith*, trans. M. Muhsin Khan, MSA/USC Hadith, on-line database, no. 6.60.358 (<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html>).
47. For the historical inscriptions and a study of the early jami' masjid site, see Page, *Historical Memoir*.
48. Ibid., pp. 32–34. The uppermost band on the third story identifies the building supervisor as Muhammad Amir Kuh. The inscriptions on the third and fourth stories identify Iltutmish as the patron. The upper part of the minar was damaged by lightning in 1369 and was repaired on the instruction of Sultan Firuz Shah, the third ruler of the Tughluq dynasty.
49. On a pillar near the central arch is an inscription identifying the project's supervisor, Fadl b. Abu'l-Ma'ali.
50. Many of these inscriptions are, however, repeated on the Tomb of Iltutmish located to the west of the mosque's qibla and discussed later.
51. For an earlier analysis of this building and its inscriptions, see A. Welch, "Qur'an and Tomb: The Religious Epigraphs of Two Early Sultanate Tombs in Delhi," in *Epigraphy: Its Bearing on the History of Art*, ed. F. M. Asher and G. S. Gai (New Delhi: Oxford University Press and the American Institute of Indian Studies, 1985), pp. 257–67.
52. A. Bain, "Qur'anic Epigraphy in the Delhi Sultanate: The 'Alai Darwaza," M.A. thesis (unpublished), University of Victoria, Victoria, 1992.
53. "You might say that it was the Paradise of Shaddad, which, after being lost, those hellites had found, and that it was the golden Lanka of Ram ... the roof was covered with rubies and emeralds ... in short, it was the holy place of the Hindus which the Malik ('Ala' al-Din's favorite eunuch and ghazi general Malik Kafur) dug up from its foundations with the great care ... and the heads of the Brahmans and idolators danced from their necks and fell to the ground at their feet. ... The stone idols called Ling Mahadel, which had been a long time established at that place ... these up to this time, the kick of the horse of Islam had not attempted to break ... and Deo Narain fell down, and the other gods who had fixed their seats there raised their feet, and jumped so high, that at one leap they reached the fort of Lanka, and in that affright the lings themselves would have fled had they any legs to stand on" (from the *Tārīkh-i 'Alā'ī* of Amir Khusrāw, trans. in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, 8 vols., 2: 96–97).
54. "In the early part of 711 H. (1311 A.D.) the army reached Delhi, bringing with it six hundred and twelve elephants, ninety-six thousand mans of gold, several boxes of jewels and pearls, and twenty thousand horses. ... The old inhabitants of Delhi remarked that so many elephants and so much gold had never before been brought into Delhi. No one could remember anything like it, nor was there anything like it in recorded history" (Ziya' al-Din Barani, *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhī*, in *ibid.*, 3: 124).
55. Page, *Historical Memoir*, p. 37. The building's panegyric Persian inscriptions are located around the central archways, while the Qur'anic inscriptions are around the ornamental arches and windows of the exterior. The Persian inscriptions repeat the same themes as the selections from scripture.

56. Ibid., p. 36. It also states that the mosque was built for the "sunna u jama'at," possibly a reference to the Maturidi "ahl al-sunna wa'l-jama'a."
57. On the west wall other themes appear: the centrality of prayer (2: 45–46), the power of divine mercy (3: 132–135), and divine power (2: 255–256).
58. This building and its epigraphs have been examined in A. Welch, "Qur'an and Tomb," pp. 257–267.
59. Chapter 3: 96–102 are inscribed on the first south arch of Iltutmish's extension of the Delhi qibla screen.
60. For another contemporary mosque in Kaman, see Michael Meister, "Indian Islam's Lotus Throne," in *Islam and Indian Regions*, ed. A. Dallapiccola (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), pp. 445–453.
61. See Michael W. Meister, "The Two-and-a-Half Day Mosque," *Oriental Art* n.s. 18 (1972): 57–63; Robert Hillenbrand, "Political Symbolism in Early Indo-Islamic Mosque Architecture: The Case of Ajmir," *Iran* 18 (1988): 105–117. The mosque's present popular name, "Two-and-a-Half Day Mosque," comes from the local tradition that it was built in that span of time.
62. "Built ... (in) Jumada II of the year 595. The Prophet, on whom may be God's blessings, said: Be speedy with your prayers before (its time) elapses and be speedy with repentance before death (intervenes)." Cited in J. Horowitz, "The Inscriptions of Muhammad ibn Sam, Qutbuddin Aibeg, and Iltutmish," *Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica* (1911–12): 12–34; esp. 15.
63. Hasan Nizami in trans. Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, 2: 222.
64. Bukhārī, *Collection*, no. 6.60.179.
65. "The sultan of the sultans of the East, Abu'l-Muzaffar Iltutmish al-Sultani, the defender of the amir of the believers, May God make his kingship and his sovereignty eternal, and may He raise his situation on the horizons" (*Reper-toire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* 10 [1941], no. 4092). The same source also provides the lengthier inscription below from the central arch.
66. Verses 61–67 were also used on Qutb al-Din's screen.
67. Chapter 17: 1–4 are also used on Iltutmish's tomb.